

EXEMPTION FROM COLLEGE FRESHMAN COMPOSITION: THE COLLEGE
LEVEL EXAMINATION PROGRAM (CLEP) GENERAL EXAMINATION IN
ENGLISH COMPOSITION AND THE AMERICAN COLLEGE TESTING
PROGRAM (ACT) ENGLISH USAGE TEST

An abstract of a Dissertation by
Robert S. Houston
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Advisor: David Foster

Problem. This study investigated exemption from freshman composition. Its two primary purposes were, first, to examine the validity and cutting scores of the original CLEP General Examination in English Composition (GE:E), a test used nationwide to grant exemption; and, second, to measure the impact freshman composition or exemption from it has on GPA.

A comprehensive review of the literature on the GE:E revealed that some researchers had confidence in the validity of the GE:E and cutting scores based on its norms whereas others expressed doubt and suspicion. The literature on the ACT English usage test (ACT:E) was reviewed to provide a basis for comparing the efficacy of the GE:E. The results of correlation studies on the test scores and GPA's for the two were typical for such tests and showed them to be similar in validity. The limits and deficiencies of correlation studies and their role in test choice and use are discussed.

Procedure. To provide additional, unique information on the GE:E, two small ($N = 22$) but homogeneous samples were drawn from the same population, fall quarter 1975 Mankato State University (MSU) freshmen. The samples were not representative of the MSU or ACT and CLEP populations. Sample A students' CLEP-GE:E scores had exempted them from English 101 Composition I. Sample B students took the course. The two samples were matched in gender, major, and composition ability as measured by the ACT:E.

The two criteria used to determine the validity of the GE:E and the appropriateness of its cutting scores were GPA and the ACT:E. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to test the null hypotheses that stated there were no relationships ($p < .05$) between ACT:E scores and GPA's and GE:E scores and GPA's for Sample A. The same procedure was used to test the null hypotheses for the relationships between ACT:E scores and GPA's for Sample B. Analysis of covariance was used to test the null hypotheses that stated there were no differences between the mean GPA's of the two samples.

In addition, Sample A students were mailed a questionnaire that asked for their opinions on exemption and the GE:E. Sample B's questionnaire asked them their opinion of freshman composition.

Findings. The correlations of test scores with GPA's revealed extremely low correlations of GE:E scores with GPA and low to moderate correlations of ACT:E scores with GPA. Because the correlations with GPA for the ACT:E were greater than those for the original GE:E, it had greater predictive and content validity than the GE:E for these samples. Two of the mean GPA's for the samples were not statistically different but two others were statistically higher for Sample A. For Sample A the GE:E had predictive validity and the cutting scores were appropriate. Composition course work had no measurable impact on GPA for Sample B.

In their questionnaire responses Sample A expressed satisfaction in exemption and doubt in the GE:E. In their questionnaire responses Sample B was supportive of freshman composition with qualifications.

Conclusions. If the same serious charges that were made against the original GE:E in the review of the literature can be made against the revised edition, it could be rejected for lacking content and predictive validity and for not being normed properly. Although both Sample A and Sample B were generally supportive of freshman composition, the content of the course and the quality of the instruction need to be scrutinized.

Recommendation. This researcher recommends that the MSU English department conduct a thorough validation study of the ACT:E. If it has validity, a multiple-regression equation based on high school GPA and ACT:E scores could be developed to predict MSU composition grades. This equation and a faculty constructed and graded essay examination could be used to grant or waive credit in Composition I and II. If the ACT:E is invalid, a thorough study of another standardized test of composition ability might be conducted.

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Robert S. Houston
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by

Robert S. Houston

Approved by Committee:

David E. Foster
Chairperson

Amberly R. Whittle

Richard G. Brooks

Maurice D. LeBeau

Bruce D. Campbell

Sade L. Campfield
Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

General Background

Cogent arguments have been made for requiring it. Persuasive arguments have been made for abolishing it. Since freshman composition first appeared in 1896 as "English A" at Harvard College, it has been stoutly defended and strongly assailed. In its checkered history it has been a pseudo-psychology course, pseudo-sociology course, pseudo-linguistics course. It has also given many teachers the opportunity to help many students become competent writers.

In his survey, now six years old, Smith found that 76 percent of the colleges and universities required one composition course, and 45 percent required two or more. Twenty-four percent required no freshman composition.¹ The students in freshman English classes engage in a variety of activities but mostly they write, "125 million words (give or take a few million) . . . each year."² Kitzhaber places freshman composition courses in one of two categories

¹Ron Smith, "The Composition Requirement Today: A Report on the Nationwide Survey of Four-Year Colleges and Universities," College Composition and Communication, XXV (May 1974), 139.

²Thomas W. Wilcox, The Anatomy of College English (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1973), p. 78.

depending on their essential purpose, practical or liberal. The practical course is a "service" course that prepares students for college by helping them acquire the composition ability expected of them in their classes.³ The liberal course will teach them to think clearly and to express that thinking in clear writing.⁴ A third type, not identified by Kitzhaber, is less a freshman composition course than a freshman literature course. The humanistic-cultural course acquaints the student with the belles-lettres and its measures of the values and worth of humankind.

Depending on the purpose of freshman English as determined by the college's English department and the individual teacher, the focus of the course can vary. The practical course most often stresses grammar, usage, and punctuation. Much time is spent teaching the students how to shape their compositions. The liberal course emphasizes logic and, to a lesser degree, psychology. Mastering rhetorical principles that place content before form is the student's major task in the liberal course. In the humanistic-cultural course the student's work is reading literary masterpieces, discussing them, and writing responses to or analyses of them. Reading is primary, writing secondary. Although

³Albert R. Kitzhaber, Themes, Theories, and Therapy: The Teaching of Writing in College (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), pp. 2-3.

⁴Kitzhaber, pp. 3-4.

generalizations marking easily recognized types of courses by purpose and content can be made, rare is the freshman course that is not a salmagundi.

Although most colleges and universities require freshman composition, nearly all exempt some students. The advocates of exemption believe benefits can accrue to both the institution and the student. They argue that the institution that recognizes student learning regardless of its source has implicitly said knowledge, not credit hours and course work, is foremost in importance. Additionally, they contend, the college that encourages adult, non-traditional students to attend by exempting them from course work believes such encouragement fosters a more knowledgeable citizenry. Furthermore, exemption aids in individualizing instruction. Finally, they claim better use of institutional facilities and faculty time and energy can result from exemption. The advantages of exemption for the student were summarized by Kreplin in her review of studies on student opinion of credit by examination. Saving time and money is the major advantage. Prestige is heightened, self-confidence enhanced, and motivation increased as a result of being exempted. Being able to enter advanced work earlier and to concentrate on preferred courses were additional advantages students identified.⁵

⁵ Hannah Kreplin, Credit by Examination: A Review and Analysis of the Literature, Ford Foundation Program for Research in University Administration. Paper P-20 (Berkeley: University of California, July 1971), pp. 47-50 (ERIC ED 064 616).

The most popular tool used to exempt students are national, standardized tests. Among the many tests are the American College Testing Program, the College Entrance Examination Board's Scholastic Aptitude Tests, Educational Testing Service's College Level Examination Program, as well as tests developed by other testing services, various publishing houses, and institutions. Occasionally the student's test results are used in conjunction with his or her high school grades, interviews, letters of recommendation, and the like to determine if the student should be exempted. Depending on his or her performance, some institutions will exempt him or her from further course work; others will require the student to substitute advanced placement or honors courses for the regular courses. Some will grant no credit whereas others will award a few or many credits.

The choice to exempt or not to exempt students from freshman composition is affected considerably by the English department's and the institution's stance on three issues: the efficacy of exempting students and waiving or granting credit by examination; the role of freshman composition; and the soundness of tests of writing ability.

The institution that accepts credit by examination presumes that learning outside of the college classroom is measurable and comparable to that learned in it. What one learns in life can be equivalent to what is learned in

college courses, and it can be learned equally well. No course or discipline is so recondite that it can resist measurement.

Not all faculty and administrators would agree with these assumptions. Seldom, they argue, is an objective, standardized test comprehensive enough in scope to measure the outcomes of courses not standardized in content. Seldom can it ask the student to do more than recall facts, that is, analyze, synthesize, and judge. "By not attending classes, students miss certain things in their general education such as: a) a systematic coverage of subject-matter; b) supporting data, material not contained in a regular textbook but furnished by the professor; c) enthusiasm and deeper points of view through interaction with faculty and other students."⁶

Those opposed to exempting students from freshman composition argue that no matter whether the course is practical, liberal, or humanistic-cultural, students can improve their writing and learn about rhetoric, logic, or literature. They claim mastering rhetorical strategies and stylistic flourishes and being capable of incisive reasoning will advance any student's writing from serviceable to praiseworthy. Those in support of exemption counter and argue that few teachers can enhance the abilities and knowledge of the talented, able student. For this student

⁶Kreplin, pp. 44-45.

freshman composition is especially onerous because it is far too often a replication of high school English. It is their charge that few college composition teachers know the principles of rhetoric or logic well enough to help students apply them to their own writing and thereby improve its quality.

Exemption of students from freshman composition is dependent on measuring the student's composition ability validly, reliably, and responsibly.

Most colleges and universities exempt students from freshman composition based on their scores on one multiple-choice objective test. It is less costly and more easily administered than either an essay test or combination objective-essay test. Usually it emphasizes recognition of grammatical, usage, and punctuation "errors" and flaws in diction and idiom. A few items on sentence structure and very few on paragraph structure are included in such tests. Most objective tests correlate moderately with one another, with essay tests, and with composition course grades.

But because they do not correlate highly and do not require the student actually to write, they are rejected by their opponents in favor of essay tests. Composing an essay requires originality, thought, and knowledge as well as a background in "correctness" and felicities; rhetorical and stylistic choices must be made. Those favoring the

essay test claim it is a direct, not oblique or associational, measure of the several components of composition ability. Lack of reliability in the quality of a student's writing from one essay to another and lack of reliability of essay evaluations among teachers are the most frequent criticisms against essay tests. They usually do not correlate as highly as objective tests with course grades.

To exempt a student from freshman composition responsibly, the content of the test should correspond to the content of the course. And the student's performance on the test should be of such quality that it is obvious he or she would learn little by taking freshman composition.

Problem

Educational Testing Service (ETS), the producer and administrator of the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), and its sponsor, The College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB), claim that students can demonstrate that they have college level writing skills and a knowledge of standard written English by equaling the national cutting score for exemption on the CLEP General Examination in English Composition (CLEP-GE:E). ETS and CEEB contend such students should be given credit for and/or exempted from college freshman composition. Students should not, they argue, waste their money and time taking courses if they can demonstrate prior mastery of their content. They

should be able to accelerate their studies or enrich them by taking other courses.

Just as ETS and CEEB presume their test has merit, many college English teachers believe their composition courses have value. They believe that it is in their classrooms that freshmen acquire or enhance their ability to write expository prose, the prose most often written for college courses and used by college graduates. Contrary to ETS and CEEB, they think the CLEP-GE in English composition does not accurately measure student writing ability and, consequently, does not proficiently exempt students from the course work. They believe the test to be invalid.

Other teachers who accept the test as being valid believe that the national cutting score for exemption has been arbitrarily set too low by the American Council of Education in concert with ETS and CEEB. They also claim exempted students enter college courses unable to do the written work demanded of them. As a result, their academic performance, as indicated by their grade point averages (GPA's), suffers. Still other teachers reject the CLEP-GE:E, claiming that no freshman should be exempted because the writing ability of all students can be improved and their knowledge of standard written English increased. By helping the student improve his or her ability to do written work, they argue, they are helping him or her succeed academically.

Purpose

Can college composition teachers support their claim that students who take freshman composition perform better academically than those who do not take it? Furthermore, is the CLEP-GE:E invalid and are cutting scores based on its norms suspect?

Can ETS and CEEB give evidence that shows students who equal the national cutting scores and do not take freshman composition perform academically as well as those who do take it? Can ETS and CEEB furnish data that prove its objective test measures writing ability and accurately predicts future student performance?

ETS and CEEB and college composition teachers cannot speak with complete confidence on the uses to which the CLEP-GE:E might be put because published research on its validity and norms is, when not lacking, likely to be conflicting. The number of research studies on it is small, and few researchers are as convinced as ETS and CEEB that it is sound. Well-ordered information on the test that is comprehensive in scope is needed by any potential user.

The first purpose of this study is to help meet the need for more research on the CLEP-GE:E. The second is to provide any potential user with an assessment of the validity and norms of the CLEP-GE:E by reviewing the current research and by comparing the validity and norms of the American College Testing Program's English usage test

to it. The third, a concomitance of the second, is to provide more information on the role of freshman composition or exemption from it. The fourth is to investigate the use of the CLEP-GE:E at Mankato State University (MSU). An appraisal of the policy at MSU of granting exemption from and awarding credit in freshman composition courses based on the student's performance on the CLEP-GE:E should be of concern to MSU faculty and administrators, and it may be of interest to faculties and administrators at other institutions.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON THE ACT:E AND CLEP-GE:E

The first and second purposes of this study, as stated previously, are to investigate and review the research on the validity and norms of the CLEP-GE in English Composition. One means of determining the validity of a test is to show the relationship of that test to various criteria.

Grades are one such criterion. GPA has its shortcomings and limitations, but its availability is the most compelling reason it is the criterion most frequently used in correlation studies such as those reviewed below. Its lack of stability and other deficiencies and their effects on correlations are at several points in this and subsequent chapters.

As shown later, the sex bias in GPA plays an influential role in the male to female ratios of student samples.

Correlation studies assume normal distribution but GPA's are seldom normally distributed. The percentage in each deviation for the normal curve for the grades A, B, C, D, and F should be 2.5, 13.5, 68, 13.5, and 2.5 respectively, but in practice it is often 7, 24, 38, 24, 7. Also, the curve is usually skewed negatively.

The reliability of grades and the reliability of standardized test scores are usually much alike. The correlations between grades and test scores given in the research

below range from extremely low to high but this range in correlations is probably no greater than those between instructors teaching the same course and those between courses.

The validity of GPA will always be suspect because college curricula, grading standards, and course objectives vary widely. One freshman's GPA can be made up of courses taught and graded quite differently from another's. The single grade a student earns in a course such as freshman composition can reflect not only the teacher's evaluation of the student's writing ability but also judgment of the student's attitude. One teacher may use grades to punish or reward students whereas another may use them in a sincere effort to characterize the student's performance in comparison to peer performance. For some teachers grades are criterion-based; for others they are normative-based.

Although GPA's are biased and not usually distributed normally, and even though their reliability and validity are in doubt, individual differences between one student and another, one teacher and another, one curriculum and another are presumed to be reconciled in correlation studies if the student samples are adequate in size and representative of the population.

Another criterion that can help determine the validity of one test is its relationship to another. Usually the criterion test is well known and inspires confidence. The ability of the American College Testing Program (ACT)

English usage test (ACT:E) to measure student composition ability and predict academic performance is the criterion used in this study to determine the efficacy of the CLEP-GE in English Composition to do the same. Analyses of the relationships of the scores on the two tests with one another and with GPA's should give an indication of the ability of each test to predict and measure. Its similarity to or difference from the relationship of the ACT:E with GPA's will be a measure of the validity of the CLEP-GE:E.

Although considered by some to be of high quality and by others to be generally satisfactory, the ACT English usage test is not without its deficiencies and limitations as the review that follows shows. The ideal criterion test would be sound beyond reproach, but, inasmuch as it is not, pronouncements regarding the validity of the test in question must be qualified. When the ACT:E is the criterion, acceptance of the CLEP-GE:E is subject to an acknowledgment of and reckoning with the inadequacies and weaknesses of the ACT:E.

The ACT's English Usage Test

The American College Testing Program's "best known and most widely used service" is the ACT Assessment Program, a

college admissions examination.¹ Only one other admissions testing program, the College Board Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), is used as widely. "Nearly 2,700 institutions and agencies in the United States and several foreign countries now participate in the program."² Colleges and universities of a wide variety--large and small, private and public, vocational and liberal, two and four-year--use the ACT. In the testing year 1977-1978, "Approximately 1 million students used the ACT Assessment Program"³ Among the many purposes of the ACT Assessment are to estimate the student's academic ability, to predict college grades, and to place students in special programs and appropriate sections of introductory college courses.⁴

The three sections of the ACT Assessment include an Interest Inventory, Student Profile Section, and four academic tests. The Interest Inventory can be used to help a student identify his preference for a college major and future occupation. The Student Profile Section provides information about the student's high school career, personal

¹The American College Testing Program, Using the ACT Assessment on Campus, 1978-1979 ed. (Iowa City, Iowa: ACT, 1978), inside front cover.

²ACT, Using the ACT Assessment, inside front cover.

³ACT, Using the ACT Assessment, p. 2.

⁴ACT, Using the ACT Assessment, inside front cover.

interests and activities, and biographical data. The four academic tests cover these subjects: English usage, mathematics usage, social studies reading, and natural sciences reading. All four tests are of the multiple-choice type.

The following description of the ACT English usage test appears in Content of the Tests of the ACT Assessment:

Description of the test. The English Usage Test is a 75-item, 40-minute test that measures the student's understanding of the conventions of standard written English and the use of the basic elements of effective expository writing: punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, diction, style, logic, and organization. The test does not measure the rote recall of rules of grammar, but stresses the analysis of the kind of effective expression which will be encountered in many postsecondary curricula. The test consists of several prose passages with certain portions underlined and numbered. For each underlined portion, four alternative responses are given. The student must decide which alternative is most appropriate in the context of the passage.

Content of the test. Five elements of effective expository writing are included in the English Usage Test. These elements and the approximate proportion of the test devoted to each are given below.

<u>Element of Standard Written English</u>	<u>Proportion of Test</u>	<u>Number of Items</u>
a. Punctuation	.17	13
b. Grammar	.18	13
c. Sentence Structure	.25	19
d. Diction and Style	.23	17
e. Logic and Organization	<u>.17</u>	<u>13</u>
Total	1.00	75

- a. Punctuation. The items in this category test such punctuation and graphic conventions as use and placement of commas, colons, semicolons,

dashes, hyphens, parentheses, apostrophes, and quotation, question, and exclamation marks.

- b. Grammar. The items in this category test agreement between subject and verb and between pronouns and their antecedents, adjectives and adverbs, and conjunctions.
- c. Sentence Structure. The items in this category test relationships between/among clauses, placement of modifiers, parallelisms, and shifts in construction.
- d. Diction and Style. The items in this category test precision in word choice, appropriateness in figurative language, and economy in writing.
- e. Logic and Organization. The items in this category test the logical organization of ideas, paragraphing, transitions, unity and coherence.⁵

Scores on the four tests are reported as standard scores. The standard score is converted from the raw score which is the number of correct answers. The standard scores range from 1 (low) to 36 (high) but not for all four tests; the high for the English usage test is 33. The four scores on the tests are combined and averaged to determine a Composite score. The range of the Composite score is from 1 to 35. ACT converts the standard scores into percentile rankings to make them meaningful to a broad audience. Scale scores and percentile ranks for the ACT:E are given later in Table 1.

The standard error of measurement for each area test is 2 and for the Composite it is 1. If a student's scale

⁵The American College Testing Program, Content of the Tests (Iowa City, Iowa: ACT, September 1978), p. 2.

score in English is the mean of 17, his score is actually between 15 and 19. The chances are approximately 68 out of 100 that his "true" score lies between these two figures. If the student scores 17 on the English test, he will be in the 44th percentile. Out of 100 students 56 will have outperformed him, but he will have outperformed 43. However, the student's "true" percentile ranking lies somewhere between the 32nd and 59th percentiles. On any given day this student could be in the bottom third or the top half of all students taking the test.

Whether or not the ACT Assessment is a test of "academic achievement, aptitude, or developed ability" has been discussed by some of its investigators.⁶ Both Lindquist and Warrington in their articles in The Coming Crisis in the Selection of Students for College Admissions, 1960, discuss the topic and conclude the distinctions are nebulous.⁷ But, as ACT says, since the fundamental purpose of the assessment is to predict success in college, the tests should measure the scholastic skills and abilities the student will need in college. Consequently, the ACT tests are "oriented

⁶Content of the Tests, p. 1.

⁷Everet Franklin Lindquist, "Achievement Testing for College Admissions," and W. G. Warrington, "Achievement Testing for College Admissions," The Coming Crisis in the Selection of Students for College Admissions, ed. Kenneth Eugene Anderson (Washington, D.C.: American Educational Research Association, 1960), pp. 19-22, 14-18.

TABLE 1

**ACT:E STANDARD SCORES AND PERCENTILE RANKS FOR
COLLEGE-BOUND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS***

Standard Score	Percentile	Standard Score	Percentile
33	99.9	16	38
32	99.8	15	32
31	99.7	14	28
30	99.4	13	23
29	99.0	12	19
28	98	11	15
27	97	10	11
26	96	9	8
25	94	8	5
24	91	7	3
23	87	6	2
22	81	5	1
21	73	4	
20	66	3	
19	59	2	
18	51	1	
17	44		

Mean 17.3

Standard Deviation 5.4

Source: ACT, Using the ACT Assessment, 1978-1979 ed. (Iowa City, Iowa: ACT, 1978), p. 4.

*Based on 2,605,381 college-bound students who took the ACT Assessment (1974-1977).

toward . . . instructional programs rather than . . . aspects of intelligence."⁸ Thus, "the tests might best be regarded simply as measures of academic development which rely partly on the students' reasoning abilities and partly on their knowledge of the subject matter fields but which emphasize their abilities to use both."⁹

The greatest task confronting anyone trying to decide whether or not to use a standardized test is determining if that test is both reliable and valid. None of the investigations of the ACT:E read for this study questioned its reliability. And given the wide use of the ACT Assessment Program, few studies in the last fifteen to twenty years have focused on the validity of the ACT:E. Correlations of ACT:E scores with GPA's have seldom been reported.

Correlation Studies of the ACT:E and Freshman English GPA's

Seven institutions and the producers of the ACT Assessment have studied the relationship between ACT:E scores and college English grades. Gell and Bleil correlated the scores and grades of 1,379 freshmen who entered Montgomery College

⁸ Content of the Tests, p. 1.

⁹ Content of the Tests, p. 1.

fall term 1969.¹⁰ The mean ACT:E score for the males was more than 1 point lower than for the females, 16.98 and 18.34 respectively. Their scores were both lower than the national mean of 19.10. The mean English 101 grade for the males was almost one-half letter grade lower than for the females, 1.91 and 2.30 respectively.¹¹ Gell and Bleil gave 2.07 as the national mean English 101 grade.¹² The correlation coefficient of ACT:E scores and English 101 grades as determined by Gell and Bleil was a low but significant .30 ($p < .05$). This correlation is, however, lower than the .47 that they gave as the national correlation.¹³

The correlation of ACT:E scores with English grades for the year for 1,547 University of Minnesota freshmen in 1964 was .372 ($p < .05$). Their mean ACT:E was 22.1 (S.D. 3.23) and college English GPA was 2.02.¹⁴ This correlation

¹⁰Robert L. Gell and David F. Bleil, Grades--Scores--Predictions: A Study of the Efficiency of High School Grades and American College Test Scores in Predicting Academic Achievement at Montgomery College (Rockville, Maryland: Montgomery College, June 1971), p. 3 (ERIC ED 052 782).

¹¹Gell and Bleil, p. 7.

¹²Gell and Bleil, p. 12.

¹³Gell and Bleil, p. 23.

¹⁴Darwin D. Hendel, Some Issues and Alternatives in the Placement of University of Minnesota Students in Freshman English, Admissions and Records Report, Vol. I, No. 1 (n.p.: University of Minnesota, December 1, 1972), Table 5, n.p.

might have been higher, as Hendel states, had the scores and grades of the top 3 percent and bottom 5 percent of the students not been excluded from the correlation.¹⁵

Similar correlations were found by Passons in his investigation and by Zimmerman and Michael in theirs. Passons determined the correlations of ACT:E scores with grades in two freshman English courses. The correlation of ACT:E scores with English 1A grades for 463 freshmen at Fresno State College in 1963 was .41 ($p < .05$). The correlation of ACT:E with English 1B ($N = 198$) was .28 ($p < .05$).¹⁶ In their investigation, Zimmerman and Michael also had two samples, one for 1962 and one for 1963. The correlation was .33 ($p < .05$) for ACT:E scores with English grades of the 165 students who took one or more English courses in 1962. The correlation was .35 ($p < .05$) for the 430 students in the 1963 sample.¹⁷

Unlike the four studies above, in his study of 124 students at Southern West Virginia Community College, Nolan

¹⁵Hendel, p. 6.

¹⁶William R. Passons, "Predictive Validities of the ACT, SAT, and High School Grades for First Semester GPA and Freshman Courses," Educational and Psychological Measurement, XXVII (Winter 1967), 1143-1144.

¹⁷Wayne S. Zimmerman and William B. Michael, "A Comparison of the Criterion-Related Validities of Three College Entrance Examinations with Different Content Emphases," Educational and Psychological Measurement, XXVII (Summer 1967), 410.

found such a low correlation that he concluded no significant relationship existed between ACT:E scores and English grades. The correlation coefficient was .0996 ($p < .05$).¹⁸

In her study prepared for The American College Testing Program, Cole acquired data from approximately 250 colleges. The correlation of ACT:E with college English grades she discovered, 0.47 ($p < .05$), was higher than any of the correlations reported in the institutional studies.¹⁹ In their study for ACT, Hoyt and Munday provided two correlations, one for junior college students and one for four-year college students. The correlations, both significant at the .05 level, were .51 for the college English grades and mean ACT:E score of 17.6 for students at 82 junior colleges and .54 for grades and mean ACT:E score of 19.8 for students at 197 four-year colleges.²⁰

The correlations found by Lins, Abel, and Hutchins were neither as high nor as low as those found by other researchers. They used two samples. In the first, the ACT:E

¹⁸ Edwin J. Nolan, The Relationship between ACT Sub-Test Scores and Grades Earned: A Correlational Study (Logan, West Virginia: Southern West Virginia Community College, n.d.), pp. 4, 2 (ERIC ED 131 902).

¹⁹ Nancy S. Cole, Differential Validity in the ACT Tests, ACT Research Report No. 30 (Iowa City, Iowa: ACT, August 1969), pp. 3,4.

²⁰ Donald P. Hoyt and Leo Munday, Academic Description and Prediction in Junior Colleges, ACT Research Report No. 10 (Iowa City, Iowa: ACT, February 1966), p. 9.

scores of 1,607 males who entered the University of Wisconsin at Madison in the fall of 1962 were correlated with their grades in freshman English courses other than Advanced Placement courses. The correlation was .48 ($p < .05$). The correlation for their 1,446 female counterparts was .44 ($p < .05$).²¹

An early study of the ACT:E of special interest was reported by Peters and Plog in the Educational Research Bulletin in 1961.²² One of the purposes of the study was to determine if the ACT:E could be used to place freshmen in remedial, regular, and honors courses at the Ohio State University (OSU). At the time faculty designed objective and essay tests were being used. No statistical comparisons of the ACT:E and OSU essay tests were conducted but it was found that if ACT:E alone had been used instead of the two OSU tests, more than twice as many students would have been placed in remedial courses and nearly two-thirds more in honors courses.²³ Statistical comparisons of the ACT:E and OSU objective tests with English course grades revealed

²¹L. Joseph Lins, Alan P. Abel, and H. Clifton Hutchins, "Relative Usefulness in Predicting Academic Success of the ACT, the SAT, and Some Other Variables," Journal of Experimental Education, XXXV (Winter 1966), 1, 25.

²²Frank R. Peters and Eugenia L. Plog, "Effectiveness of the ACT for Selection and Placement at the Ohio State University," Educational Research Bulletin, XL (December 13, 1961), 232-241, 252.

²³Peters and Plog, p. 238.

that, although similar in format and type of test item, of eight correlations (given below) the OSU test was higher in seven. All correlations were significant at the .05 level. The data were based on figures given in Table V on page 239. Based on their findings,

English Courses	N	ACT:E \bar{r}	OSU Test \bar{r}
Remedial	509	.27	.31
Regular	2036	.36	.43
Honors	144	.42	.34
	2960	.49	.56

Peters and Plog judged the OSU tests superior to the ACT:E and argued that a local test is more accurate because it is designed to meet particular needs and conditions.²⁴

In general, the correlations between ACT:E and English course grades were low to moderate for researchers affiliated with institutions whereas the correlations for researchers affiliated with ACT were moderate and typical. Despite the differences none of the correlations can be judged to be more accurate or useful than another.

That the correlations found by the institutional researchers were lower than those found by ACT's researchers is not unexpected. The best estimate of relationships is usually provided when the sample includes a variety of students from a variety of colleges. This was demonstrated by Richards, Holland, and Lutz when they correlated ACT:E

²⁴Peters and Plog, p. 252.

scores and GPA's for male sophomores at 22 colleges. The correlations ranged from $-.11$ to $.46$ and the median was $.23$.²⁵ Smaller and more homogeneous samples can limit the ranges of student talent and performance. Sex and curriculum biases can enter a sample taken from a single institution as was demonstrated by Lenning. The correlation between ACT:E scores and overall GPA's of cadets at the United States Air Force Academy was a very low 0.24 .²⁶ The sample was biased in that only high ability (talent) males (sex) attending an institution emphasizing the natural sciences (curriculum) were surveyed.

The grade a student earns in a college freshman first term composition course usually implies a relationship between composition ability and achievement in the course. The grade in part is a measure of ability. The ACT:E is an indirect measure of a student's composition ability. The ability itself is not measured; knowledge of some of the aspects associated with composition ability are inventoried. Composition course grades and ACT:E scores are partial and oblique measurements of writing ability. If each were totally reliable and valid, they would correlate perfectly

²⁵James M. Richards, Jr., John L. Holland, and Sandra W. Lutz, The Prediction of Student Accomplishment in College, ACT Research Report No. 13 (Iowa City, Iowa: ACT, June 1966), pp. 15, 23.

²⁶Oscar T. Lenning, Predictive Validity of the ACT Tests at Selective Colleges, ACT Research Report No. 69 (Iowa City, Iowa: ACT, August 1975), p. 7.

and this correlation would result in perfect prediction.

The reliability and validity of composition course grades and ACT:E scores are restricted. The objectives and grading practices of instructors can vary from one to another. The course grade could be based on improvement in the quality of the student's work, not its quality per se. Attendance, class participation, objective tests on reading assignments, and other criteria can be among the determinants of a freshman composition course grade. By emphasizing such factors as correctness and usage and by deemphasizing factors such as logic and style, the ACT:E may be testing the student's knowledge of aspects of composition that have little effect on teacher evaluations of the quality of compositions. Placement and exemption based on the correlations between two unstable measurements can never be totally confidence inspiring; they can be disadvantageous to the student and the college.

Low to moderate correlations such as those described above of ACT:E scores with college English grades can be statistically significant and can be judged to be fair to good predictors. Such appraisals may be meaningful to a psychometrician but of no practical worth to administrators and teachers. Taking .41 to be the median of the correlations of ACT:E scores with freshman English grades and applying the "index of forecasting efficiency," the result is .09. Prediction of how well a student would do in a

freshman composition course would be 9 percent better than by chance--this is the contribution of the correlation. Applying the "coefficient of determination" to the same correlation results in .17. Whatever the ACT:E measures accounts for 17 percent of the variables that determine the student's composition course grade. Eighty-three percent of the variation is determined by factors such as test invalidity, chance, and student motivation that are not accounted for by the ACT:E.

Should a decision regarding placement or exemption be influenced by a moderate correlation like .41 or must it be greater? Must a high correlation like .70 having an index of forecasting efficiency of 29 percent and coefficient of determination of 49 percent be reached before it should contribute to a decision affecting a student and his or her college? Decision makers at each individual institution must establish their own standards using any means they deem appropriate and useful. A tool like correlation can be helpful for decision makers conversant with statistical analyses when they are establishing standards.

Correlation Studies of the ACT:E and First Term and Yearly GPA's

In addition to correlating ACT:E scores with English 101 grades, Gell and Bleil also correlated them with freshman fall term GPA's. Once again, the correlation coefficient they determined was lower than the national figure,

.34 compared to .48.²⁷ The correlation for the 882 freshmen in Passons' study was a comparable .33 ($p < .05$).²⁸ Borgatta and Bohrnstedt correlated the ACT:E scores with first semester grades of 509 University of Wisconsin freshmen. The correlation they determined, .39 ($p < .05$), is nearer Gell and Bleil's and Passons' figures than ACT's figure of .48.²⁹ Using a much larger sample, Aleamoni and Oboler found a correlation very near Borgatta and Bohrnstedt's. Aleamoni and Oboler surveyed 4,100 freshmen who entered the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, "a highly selective midwestern university," and found a correlation of .375 ($p < .05$) between the students' ACT:E scores and first semester GPA's.³⁰ The correlation found by Boyce and Paxon exceeded the correlation found by any institution or ACT. The ACT:E scores and first quarter grades of 100 freshmen who entered Troy State College in Alabama from 1959 to 1964 correlated .64 ($p < .05$). These students, of whom "more than half . . . become teachers,"

²⁷Gell and Bleil, p. 23.

²⁸Passons, p. 1144.

²⁹Edgar F. Borgatta and George W. Bohrnstedt, "The Use of the Quick Number Test in the Prediction of Academic Performance," Educational and Psychological Measurement, XXIX (Winter 1969), 921-922.

³⁰Lawrence M. Aleamoni and Linda A. Oboler, ACT Versus SAT in Predicting First Semester GPA, Paper Presented at the 61st Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association in New York, April 4-8, 1977, pp. 2-3, 9 (ERIC ED 139 815).

attended a college that demanded a normal distribution of grades.³¹

Maxey and Ferguson studied the freshmen who attended 28 colleges. The colleges were divided into four types depending on the degree they granted: associate, bachelor's, master's, or doctorate. There were at least six colleges of each type.³² The correlation between the ACT:E scores (mean 19.1) and first term grades (mean 2.6) of the 20,723 students was .59.³³ The correlation these American College Testing Program researchers discovered was higher than the .48 determined by their colleague Cole.

The data compiled by Maxey and Ferguson is comprehensive and informative. The ACT:E mean score range for the 28 colleges was from 15.0 to 23.9 and the mean range of the grades was 2.2 to 2.9.³⁴ The correlations ranged from .41 at two colleges to .74 at one college.³⁵ The students at

³¹Richard W. Boyce and P. C. Paxon, "The Predictive Validity of Eleven Tests at One State College," Educational and Psychological Measurement, XXV (Winter 1965), 1144-1145.

³²E. James Maxey and Richard L. Ferguson, "Differential Validity of the ACT Assessment for Predicting College Averages of High School Students Tested as Juniors and Seniors," Journal of College Student Personnel, XVII (May 1976), 221.

³³Figures are extrapolations from data given on pages 223-225 of Maxey and Ferguson.

³⁴Maxey and Ferguson, pp. 223-225.

³⁵Maxey and Ferguson, pp. 223-225.

the college having the .74 correlation had an ACT:E mean score of 20.1 and 2.7 GPA.³⁶ At one of the two colleges having the .41 correlation the students' ACT:E mean was 16.9 and their GPA was 2.9. At the other college the ACT:E mean was 17.4 and GPA was 2.5.³⁷

The 80 freshmen who attended Indiana University during the academic year 1963-1964 and were part of a study by Sassenrath and Pugh had a mean ACT:E score of 22.9. Their mean grades were 2.70 for the first semester and 2.65 for the second semester. The correlation of their first semester grades with ACT:E scores was .59; second semester grades and ACT:E correlation was .52.³⁸ Both correlations were significant at the .05 level. Lins, Abel, and Hutchins also correlated ACT:E scores with first and second semester grades. The correlation for 1,873 men first semester was .414 and for 1,728 women it was .466. Second semester the correlation for 1,696 men was .343 and .409 for 1,637 women.³⁹ For her doctoral dissertation Zarate studied the relationship between ACT:E scores and fall and winter quarter

³⁶Maxey and Ferguson, pp. 223-225.

³⁷Maxey and Ferguson, p. 223.

³⁸Julius M. Sassenrath and Richard Pugh, "Relationships among CEEB Scholastic Test and American College Test Scores and Grade Point Average," Journal of Educational Measurement, II (December 1965), 200-201.

³⁹Lins, Abel, and Hutchins, p. 5.

GPA's. There were 144 freshmen in the sample for fall quarter and the correlation of their grades with ACT:E scores was .617. The winter quarter sample was composed of 131 freshmen and the correlation for their group was .657.⁴⁰

Most of the institutional researchers found low correlations of ACT:E scores with first term grades, but some found moderate correlations. The two ACT studies gave moderate correlations. The correlations were comparable to the ones investigators gave of ACT:E scores with freshman English grades, but they were typically lower than the correlations given between ACT:E scores and first term GPA's. If a test is designed to measure one particular ability and to predict performance in a course that emphasizes that ability, one might expect moderate or high correlations. But because the ACT:E is a better predictor of GPA's based on diverse abilities than of GPA's based on the ability that is its own province, doubts regarding the validity of the test might be raised.

Assuming greater uniformity in grading and similarity in the content of freshman composition courses than in freshman general education courses, better prediction of composition course grades than first term GPA's might be

⁴⁰Narcisa Zarate, "Predictive Factors of Academic Success for Freshmen of a Multicultural University," Diss. New Mexico State University 1976, pp. 35, 80.

expected of the ACT:E. However, composition grading may be unreliable, and composition course grades may be based on highly dissimilar course requirements. Furthermore, if performance in general education courses is highly dependent on composition ability, and if that ability is a broad general ability that resists measurement, higher correlations between first term grades than composition course grades could be anticipated. The higher correlations researchers report for ACT:E scores and first term grades than for any of the other ACT tests and GPA's can be indicative of a dependence of GPA on composition ability and the presence of a composition course.

The correlation for freshman year GPA and ACT:E scores was .59 as reported by Sassenrath and Pugh.⁴¹ The correlations reported by Lins, Abel, and Hutchins were .401 for 1,696 males and .469 for 1,637 females.⁴² Two ACT researchers, Lutz and Richards, surveyed nearly 9,000 students at 14 junior and 21 senior colleges.⁴³ Both students and institutions were diverse. For the total sample the correlation of ACT:E scores with freshman grades was .41

⁴¹Sassenrath and Pugh, p. 201.

⁴²Lins, Abel, and Hutchins, p. 5.

⁴³Sandra W. Lutz and James M. Richards, Jr., Predicting Student Accomplishment in College from the ACT Assessment, ACT Research Report No. 21 (Iowa City, Iowa: ACT, August 1967), pp. 6-7, 10.

for the males and .45 for females.⁴⁴ The correlation for males at the junior colleges was .38 and .49 for females.⁴⁵ At the senior colleges the correlation for males and females was the same, 0.42.⁴⁶

In a study made prior to his and Lutz's study, however, Richards and two other ACT researchers discovered very low and low correlations of freshman grades with ACT:E scores. Five hundred three males and 592 females at 6 colleges were surveyed. Their median correlations were, respectively, .22 and .30.⁴⁷

In the same study Richards, Holland, and Lutz correlated sophomore grades with ACT:E scores. One thousand three hundred seventy-three males and 1,400 females at 20 colleges were surveyed. The median correlations were for the males a very low .28 and for the females a low .37.⁴⁸ The correlation of ACT:E scores with sophomore grades of 122 students at Chesapeake College was .47 as reported by Black.⁴⁹

⁴⁴Lutz and Richards, p. 16.

⁴⁵Lutz and Richards, p. 35.

⁴⁶Lutz and Richards, p. 36.

⁴⁷Richards, Holland, and Lutz, p. 12.

⁴⁸Richards, Holland, and Lutz, p. 13.

⁴⁹Hubert P. Black, The Efficiency of the American College Testing Program and High School Grades for Predicting the Achievement of Chesapeake College Students (n.p.: Chesapeake College, January 1969), p. 16 (ERIC ED 029 626).

Most studies of the ACT:E scores and sophomore GPA's are studies of the final grades of junior college students. In their study limited to 39 John Wood Community College students who had graduated and intended to transfer to a senior college, Hayes and Bradshaw identified a correlation of .405 between the students' mean ACT:E score of 18.512 and GPA of 2.885.⁵⁰ Baird, another ACT researcher, had a much larger sample of 1,628 men and 1,079 women from 27 representative community colleges. The correlations for both men and women, .32 and .38 respectively, were low but significant.⁵¹ Wilson and Blum reported a correlation of .39 between ACT:E scores and overall GPA of Ohlone College students.⁵²

Hoyt and Munday correlated the ACT:E scores and overall GPA's of both junior college and four-year college students. The correlation was .51 at the junior colleges and .55 at the four-year colleges.⁵³ Lenning, a colleague of Hoyt's

⁵⁰ Daniel T. Hayes and Steve Bradshaw, Studies of Occupational and Transfer Student Success at John Wood Community College (Quincy, Illinois: John Wood Community College, December 1977), pp. 1-2 (ERIC ED 152 369).

⁵¹ Leonard L. Baird, "Prediction of Academic and Non-academic Achievement of Two-Year Colleges from the ACT Assessment," Educational and Psychological Measurement, XXIX (Summer 1969), 423, 426.

⁵² Pete Wilson and William Blum, The Nature, Predictive Value, and Use of the American College Test at Ohlone College (n.p.: Ohlone College, 1968), p. 7 (ERIC ED 028 766).

⁵³ Hoyt and Munday, p. 9.

and Munday's at ACT, correlated the ACT:E scores and final GPA's of 619 United States Air Force Academy students. The correlation was a very low .24.⁵⁴

The few studies that isolated the ACT:E and correlated it with freshman, sophomore, and overall GPA's showed similar r values from one year to the next. This similarity might suggest that the importance of English ability stays essentially the same throughout the student's college career. The correlations of ACT:E scores with freshman year GPA's reported by ACT were lower than those they reported for ACT:E scores and first term grades and were consistent with ACT's goal of predicting first term grades. Most institutional researchers reported either low or moderate correlations as did ACT but ACT alone reported very low correlations. When judged by the correlations given above, it can be said ACT:E scores are fair to good predictors of grades.

Content Validity of the ACT:E

In remarks that might be disconcerting to the composition teacher, Wallace claims that ACT's request for researchers to review the content validity of the test is "patently inappropriate." Wallace argues that predictive

⁵⁴Lenning, p. 7.

ability alone is "ample evidence" of content validity.⁵⁵ Apparently investigators of the ACT:E concur with Wallace because in none of the investigations read for the present study was content validity a topic of concern.

However, Wallace and the other researchers are ignoring a use made of the ACT:E other than grade prediction. Students are exempted from college freshman composition courses and are placed in advanced and remedial courses based on their ACT:E scores. The implied presumption between such exemption and placement is the belief that the content of the test corresponds to the content of a particular course. The student's ACT:E score purportedly reveals whether he or she has already mastered the content of the course or is not prepared to enter it. The percentage of items devoted to punctuation or logic and organization or any of the other areas tested by the ACT:E might not reflect the amount of study devoted to them in a given college composition course. Preliminary to acceptance or rejection of any standardized test, which is a curriculum decision bearing on general education requirements, the teacher must ask if the test measures the objectives of the course.

⁵⁵Wimburn L. Wallace, rev. of the "ACT Test Battery of The American College Testing Program" in The Seventh Mental Measurements Yearbook, ed. Oscar Krisen Buros (Highland Park, New Jersey: The Gryphon Press, 1972), I, p. 614.

Bias and ACT:E Scores

The need to identify the number of males and females in the samples in studies of the ACT:E has been implied in the research cited above. Males and females score differently on the test and samples having a percentage of either gender disproportionate to their populations are biased samples. Males typically score lower on the ACT:E and have lower GPA's. Not only do women score higher on the ACT:E and have higher GPA's, correlations between the two are higher for them.

The need to identify the student's major field of study does not exist for the researcher whose sample of a college population is large and randomly drawn. But if it is not, it could be biased for or against students different in knowledge and ability. Hoyt provides examples of these differences. He found that liberal arts freshmen are much like other members of their classes in ACT scores and college GPA's. Education students had lower scores but higher GPA's. Business students had lower scores and GPA's. Engineering students had higher ACT scores but lower GPA's.⁵⁶

Astin's findings disagreed in some regards with Hoyt's but agreed in most. He found that students majoring in the humanities are more able and earned higher freshman GPA's

⁵⁶Donald P. Hoyt, Forecasting Academic Success in Specific Colleges, ACT Research Report No. 27 (Iowa City, Iowa: ACT, August 1968), pp. 21-23.

than other freshmen. According to him, business, physical education, and education students are lower in average ability and tend to earn lower freshman GPA's. Men who have chosen a major and men who have not are equal in ability, but the undecided men earn higher GPA's as freshmen probably because they have more interests and are more concerned about their performance in general education classes than are committed students. Women majoring in mathematics have higher GPA's and higher average ability. Women majoring in biology and the other physical sciences are higher in ability but earn grades like those of other women.⁵⁷

Because students from the Midwest, Rocky Mountains, Plains, and the South take the ACT:E more frequently than do students from the Northeast and Middle Atlantic states, their performance results in a geographic bias.⁵⁸ Men and women living in the different regions score differently on the ACT:E.⁵⁹ Students bound for state supported colleges

⁵⁷ Alexander W. Astin, Predicting Academic Performance in College: Selectivity Data for 2300 American Colleges (New York: The Free Press, 1971), pp. 13-14.

⁵⁸ The American College Testing Program Research and Development Division, Your College Freshmen: Interpretive Guide to ACT Research Services for Higher Education (Iowa City, Iowa: ACT, 1971), p. 60.

⁵⁹ Richard L. Sawyer, College Student Profiles: Norms for the ACT Assessment, 1976-1977 ed. (Iowa City, Iowa: ACT, 1976), passim.

and universities take the ACT:E more frequently than do students bound for private institutions.⁶⁰ Students attending public institutions have ACT:E scores different from those attending private institutions.⁶¹ Those attending two-year schools are different from those attending four-year schools. Depending on the degrees the institution grants, students can once again differ in their ACT:E scores.⁶² The correlation studies reviewed above provide additional instances of the variety of ACT:E scores and GPA's of students attending institutions diverse in place, purpose, and type of control.

Differences in composition ability parallel differences in gender, major, and GPA. These differences must be reckoned with in the design of any research project.

The CLEP's General Examination
in English Composition

The major purpose of the CLEP is to give any person, regardless of age or background, credit towards a college degree for college level learning no matter how it was acquired. ETS and CEEB believe people can acquire from their jobs, military service, reading, television, or any

⁶⁰ACT, Your College Freshmen, p. 60.

⁶¹Sawyer, *passim*.

⁶²Sawyer, *passim*.

other source outside the college environment, college level knowledge. Consequently, ETS and CEEB argue, any student should be given the opportunity to reduce the amount of time and money needed to earn a college degree.

Just how many students have taken CLEP, how many have earned credit, and how much credit has been earned, are questions CEEB and ETS ostensibly answer in surveys such as Grandy and Shea's. In the 1973-1974 academic year 300,000 General Examinations were given; on the average 60 percent of the students earned passing scores and nearly 75 percent "receive[d] credit in some area."⁶³ The number of hours of credit granted is not revealed however.

Of the two types of tests CLEP offers, General Examinations and Subject Examinations, this study is restricted to one of the five General Examinations, the General Examination in English Composition (GE:E). The other four General Examinations are in the humanities, mathematics, social sciences and history, and natural sciences. Through them CLEP purports to test the material students study in the courses that constitute the general education requirements of most degree programs. Until 1978 each of the five tests was a one-hour multiple-choice objective test. In 1978 the

⁶³ Jerilee Grandy and Walter M. Shea, The CLEP General Examinations in American Colleges and Universities, Report prepared and produced for the College Entrance Examination Board by Educational Testing Service (Princeton, New Jersey: ETS, 1976), p. 3.

English Composition test was offered in two forms, each ninety-minute examinations. One form has two 45-minute multiple-choice sections; the other has a 45-minute multiple-choice and 45-minute essay section. Since the students who comprise one of the samples in this study took the CLEP-GE:E in 1975, the examination they took was the one-hour, ninety-item examination.

The General Examination in English Composition was revised according to CEEB in response to institutional demands.⁶⁴ Why those demands were made is known to anyone aware of the difficulty of measuring writing ability and of the debate about granting credit by examination as discussed previously. And anyone aware of the charges against the cutting scores and validity of the original CLEP-GE:E reviewed later knows why changes in its format and content had to effected. By making the changes they did, ETS and CEEB were tacitly acknowledging some of the deficiencies of the first CLEP-GE:E. Apparently the English Composition Development Committee selected by ETS to help design the new test was apprised of the critics' charge that the original test lacked content validity. (This charge is discussed later.) The Committee tried to "avoid items solely devoted to error recognition" and to include items

⁶⁴Educational Testing Service, Announcing a New CLEP General Examination in English Composition (Princeton, New Jersey: ETS, 1977), p. 5.

on "selected aspects of the act of writing" ⁶⁵ The demand for a writing sample was met by the inclusion of the 45-minute essay and its use was strongly urged by the Committee. ⁶⁶

The chairwoman of that committee, Lynn Quitman Troyka, is also the Chair of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (4 C's) for 1979-1980. In 1978 this professional organization passed a resolution revelatory of one of the concerns of the members. In part the resolution called for a clear explanation to be made to students and teachers alike of the nature, purpose, and results of any test used for placement, exemption, or certification of competence. This resolution would implicitly make test-makers responsible for providing honest and thorough descriptions of their tests. The resolution also asked that before any objective or essay test of writing ability be given, the complexities, appropriateness, design, and scoring of the test be considered. The resolution charged that no student be placed, exempted or certified competent "without submitting a piece of written discourse." ⁶⁷ Despite the

⁶⁵ETS, Announcing a New CLEP General Examination, p. 5.

⁶⁶ETS, Announcing a New CLEP General Examination, p. 5.

⁶⁷Conference on College Composition and Communication, "CCCC Business Meeting" (mimeographed paper, Denver, April 1, 1978), p. 1.

urging of ETS's Committee and the 4 C's resolution, fewer than 5 percent of the new GE:E's that have been administered thus far have been the essay form.⁶⁸ Since the objective form of the new test is most frequently used and since its form and content are in some ways comparable to the original, charges against the old test might have applicability to the new.

ETS and CEEB, their original GE:E, its development and promotion deserved much of the opposition they encountered. Perhaps the revised CLEP-GE:E deserves equally strong opposition. Matters of content validity, scoring, cutting scores, norming and the like need to be taken into account and considered carefully by any user of a standardized test. Until studies like some of those reviewed below are available on the revised CLEP-GE:E, potential users might be aided in their evaluation of the new test by knowing the weaknesses and deficiencies of the original.

CLEP-GE:E scores are formula scores that have been converted to scale scores. The formula score is determined by subtracting a fraction of the wrong answers from the right answers. The range of the scale scores is from 200 to 800. The mean of the original edition of the CLEP-GE:E is 498 and the standard deviation is 99. Scale scores and percentile

⁶⁸Lynn Quitman Troyka, "An Overview of Selected Prominent Tests," Address presented at the 30th Annual Conference on College Composition and Communication Meeting, Minneapolis, April 6, 1979.

ranks are given on the following page.

The standard error of measurement for the CLEP-GE:E is 31.⁶⁹ If a person scored the mean of 498 on the GE:E his "true" score would fall somewhere between 467 and 529 or between approximately the 39th and 62nd percentiles. If he repeated the test, two out of three times his score would be between these limits. One out of three times his score would be above or below this range.

Reliability for the CLEP is determined by giving different forms of the examinations presumed equivalent to groups of subjects. If the subjects maintain the same relative standing in their groups based on their scores on the different forms, the examinations are considered equivalent and, therefore, reliable measures. The reliability of the CLEP-GE:E as reported by CEEB is .92.⁷⁰ A correlation coefficient between one form of a test and another is satisfactory when this high.

The norms for the scale scores and percentile ranks were based on a random and representative sample of college sophomores who took the CLEP tests the spring of 1963. Since the CLEP-GE:E purportedly tested student knowledge of the material studied in general education courses, a sample based

⁶⁹ College Entrance Examination Board, CLEP Scores: Interpretation and Use (Princeton, New Jersey: CEEB, 1976), p. 13.

⁷⁰ CLEP Scores, p. 13.

TABLE 2
PERCENTILE RANKS FOR THE CLEP-GE:E*

Scaled Score	Men	Women	Total
800			
780			
760			
740		99	
720		98	99
700	99	97	98
680	98	96	97
660	95	94	95
640	93	91	92
620	90	86	88
600	86	79	83
580	82	73	78
560	78	66	73
540	74	57	66
520	67	50	59
500	60	43	52
480	51	35	44
460	43	28	36
440	35	22	29
420	27	16	22
400	21	12	17
380	15	9	12
360	10	6	8
340	6	4	5
320	4	3	4
300	2	2	2
280	1	1	1
Mean	482	516	498
Standard Deviation	98	98	99
No. of Sophomores	1375	1207	2582
Scaled Scores for Selected Percentiles			
Percentile	Men	Women	Total
75	545	585	570
50	477	520	494
25	413	451	428

Source: CEEB, CLEP Scores (Princeton, New Jersey: CEEB, 1976), p. 10.

*Data are based on administration of the General Examinations to a sample of 2,582 sophomore students completing their second year of study at 180 two-year and four-year colleges in the spring of 1963.

on sophomores was appropriate. The sample included 1,375 men and 1,207 women for a total of 2,582.⁷¹

CEEB claims the CLEP-GE's have content validity because scholars and teachers throughout America work with test development specialists from ETS. Developing the tests, including identifying the skills, writing questions, determining item difficulty, and norming the test, takes about 18 to 30 months.⁷²

Concurrent validity, "the relationship of the tests to current college-level achievement," is assured, CEEB claims, because sophomore CLEP-GE scores are higher after the students have taken college courses in the appropriate areas than before.⁷³ For example, the students who took no courses in mathematics had a mean score of 445 on the General Examination in Mathematics. Those who had taken at least one course had a mean score of 497. And those in the group who had "most courses taken," a heading CEEB does not explain, had a mean of 577.⁷⁴

Although such increases occur in four of the General

⁷¹CLEP Scores, p. 10.

⁷²College Entrance Examination Board, CLEP General and Subject Examinations: Descriptions and Sample Questions (Princeton, New Jersey: CEEB, 1974), p. 4.

⁷³CEEB, CLEP General and Subject Examinations, p. 8.

⁷⁴CLEP Scores, p. 14.

Examinations, they do not occur in English Composition.

The English Composition scores given below (from page 14 of CLEP Scores) are the exception.

No Courses Taken	At Least One Course Taken	Most Courses Taken
N = 41	N = 1,727	N = 762
\bar{X} = 501	\bar{X} = 503	\bar{X} = 488

According to CEEB this anomaly "results from the practice of excusing able students from some or all of the composition courses and requiring more composition courses for less able students."⁷⁵

Another indicator of validity, according to CEEB, are the consistent correlations shown between students' majors and CLEP-GE scores. Sophomores majoring in the biological sciences outperform sophomores majoring in the humanities and fine arts on the General Examination in the natural sciences. Contrarily, humanities and fine arts majors outperform biology majors on the GE in English Composition.⁷⁶

The description of the CLEP-GE:E that follows was taken from pages 5-8 of CEEB's publication, CLEP General and Subject Examinations:

When you take the General Examination in English Composition, you will have an opportunity to show how well you can do the kind of writing that college

⁷⁵CLEP Scores, p. 14

⁷⁶CLEP Scores, pp. 14-15.

students are most often asked to do. Because there are many different ways of teaching people how to write, there are no questions on the General Examination in English Composition that focus on material or approaches identified with a particular course of study.

The standard by which your answers to questions on this examination will be judged right or wrong is generally referred to as 'standard written English,' or the conventional language that a student is expected to use in most academic situations. It is, for example, the language of most textbooks and assigned papers.

The conventions of standard written English call for particular solutions to the problems of grammar, usage, diction, and idiom, as well as the construction of clear and varied sentences that have a style appropriate to the purpose and the audience for which the writing is intended.

The General Examination in English Composition contains about 90 questions to be answered in 60 minutes. Each form of the test consists of three of the four kinds of multiple-choice questions described in the following pages. The questions are organized by kind into sections, and each section has its own directions.

One kind of question asks you to recognize writing that is correct and effective according to the conventions of standard written English.

.

Another kind of question asks you to recognize actual errors and other unacceptable constructions. [The errors are faulty diction, verbosity and redundancy, clichés and inappropriate metaphors, and faulty grammar and sentence structure.]

.

Another kind of question . . . [asks you] to change the sentence according to specific directions--that is, to 'rewrite' the sentence, but to keep, insofar as possible, its original meaning. . . . The word or phrase you choose should be the most accurate and most effective of all the choices given, and should be part of a sentence that meets the requirements of standard written English.

.

Another kind of question asks you not so much to identify unacceptable usage as to choose the best way of phrasing a sentence. . . . In choosing answers, remember to follow the requirements of standard written English and choose the answer that produces the most effective sentence--clear and exact, without awkwardness or ambiguity.

.

You can see that the General Examination in English Composition will ask you to spot errors or weaknesses where they exist, to evaluate and classify sentences that are either incorrect or unacceptable for some specific reason, and to construct sentences of various kinds. All the questions cover points of correctness and effectiveness of expression that are considered important by scholars and teachers who have experience with the writing done by college students.

Two surveys sponsored by CEEB provide information, although limited, on institutional and student use of the CLEP-GE's. Sixty percent of the institutions assign credit on the CLEP-GE:E to a course entitled English Composition; another 32 percent assign it to a freshman English course.⁷⁷ For the 356 responding institutions, the maximum cutting score was 600 and the median was 494 for the CLEP-GE:E.⁷⁸ Two hundred sixty-three institutions granted from 2 to 12 semester hours of credit in English with 6 being the median. Sixty-seven institutions granted from 3 to 12 quarter hours of credit with 8 being the median.⁷⁹

⁷⁷Grandy and Shea, p. 8.

⁷⁸Grandy and Shea, p. 10.

⁷⁹Grandy and Shea, p. 11.

TABLE 3
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTIONS OF CUTTING SCORES BY
INSTITUTIONS USING THE GENERAL EXAMINATION
IN ENGLISH COMPOSITION

Score Intervals	Number	Percent
581-600	1	0.3%
561-580	4	1%
541-560	7	2%
521-540	8	2%
501-520	7	2%
481-500	208	58%
461-480	30	8%
441-460	31	9%
421-440	49	14%
401-420	5	1%
Less than 401	7	2%

Source: Grandy and Shea, The CLEP General Examinations
(Princeton, New Jersey: ETS, 1976), p. 11.

The procedures that are used to determine cutting scores either singularly or in combination are varied. The list below, taken from Grandy and Shea, page 11, tells which standards are used but not why.

Standards Used by Institutions to Set
Cutting Scores on the General Examinations:

	Number of Institutions	Percent of Institutions
1. Standards are set from national norms.	288	59%
2. Standards are set by faculty review of tests.	183	37%
3. Standards of comparable institutions are used as a guide.	174	35%

4. Standards are based upon our own norming studies.	77	16%
5. Standards are set by statewide policy.	74	15%
6. Credit is awarded at the 25th percentile score following the American Council on Education recommendation.	74	15%
7. Each division or department sets its own standards.	53	11%
8. Standards are set based upon considerations not mentioned above.	550	10%

Casserly surveyed people who had taken the CLEP tests. The questionnaires she sent out attempted to gain answers to such questions as who takes CLEP and why, and what the respondents' attitude was towards awarding credit by examination or determining placement based on test results. In response to open-ended questions, respondents could give any general views about CLEP that they had. The respondents themselves, like other critics of the test, questioned the content validity of the CLEP-GE's:

Criticisms of the examinations were frequently made by respondents who took them in or just after graduating from secondary school. Happy as most of them were with the credit and placement awarded them by colleges, the critics found the examinations based too much on general knowledge and not academically rigorous enough. They doubted the exams' validity because the level was 'so low' in relationship to their secondary school work. A few suggested CLEP be used to opt out of the last year of high school. Others commented that 'if this represents college level

work, heaven help us.' This group was doubly relieved to be saving time and money in attaining a college degree even if they didn't respect the examinations. Others commented that the exams, were 'unreal' or 'lacking in substance' in comparison to other College Board sponsored tests they had taken the same year.⁸⁰

The CLEP tests have met hostility and distrust. Some college teachers and administrators are antagonistic toward them, because, among other reasons, CEEB and ETS provide them with incomplete information on the tests and will only reluctantly supply more nearly complete information when it is requested. For example, no data on item selection and difficulty or raw scores are included in CLEP Scores: Interpretation and Use, a "booklet of technical information . . . designed to assist . . . college and university . . . faculty members" ⁸¹ And when CEEB or ETS does publish information on the CLEP-GE's, it can be flawed by notable omissions or questionable interpretations. The article reviewed below, Measurement of College Achievement by the College Level Examination Program by Amiel T. Sharon, is one such publication.

The article purported to be a discussion of criterion-related and "construct" validity of the GE's utilizing,

⁸⁰ Patricia Lund Casserly, College Level Examination Program: Its Meaning to Participants, College Entrance Examination Board Research and Development Report No. 6 (New York: CEEB, 1973), p. 28.

⁸¹ College Entrance Examination Board, CLEP Scores, p. 5.

primarily, research studies done at various colleges and universities.⁸² According to Sharon the median coefficient given in six studies on the correlation of the CLEP-GE:E with sophomore GPA was .46.⁸³ Two of the reports were completed by CEEB, were unpublished, and were unavailable to this researcher. Two institutional reports were also unpublished and unavailable. Of the other two institutional reports, both were published although one was not published until after Sharon's paper appeared. One did not examine the CLEP-GE:E and the other examined not the CLEP-GE's but their precursors. Sharon labels as moderate the reported correlations--.40, .40, .36, .30, and .46--which, with one exception, would be labeled low by most statisticians.⁸⁴ Sharon states that one explanation for correlations of this magnitude is the General Examinations' similarity in type and content to tests used to determine grades. Even though at least two of the six articles did not consider the CLEP-GE:E, Sharon draws the following inference: ". . . these results suggest that the tests can be used legitimately for granting course credit or placement in college."⁸⁵

⁸²Amiel T. Sharon, Measurement of College Achievement by the College Level Examination Program, Educational Testing Service Research Bulletin 70-38 (Princeton, New Jersey: ETS, 1970), p. i.

⁸³Sharon, p. 4.

⁸⁴Sharon, p. 4.

⁸⁵Sharon, p. 4.

Sharon cites the same two studies, ignores their omissions, and asserts that correlations between the CLEP-GE's and grades in courses corresponding to the tests are lower than correlations between CLEP-GE:E's and sophomore GPA's.⁸⁶ No data were given. His explanation why correlations with courses are lower than correlations with sophomore GPA is essentially accurate. Sophomore GPA is based on a larger sample.⁸⁷

The median correlation for the CLEP-GE:E with junior GPA of .36 Sharon cited was based on one article that did not consider the CLEP-GE:E's and two others that were unpublished.⁸⁸ If Sharon has made legitimate use of his sources, he is right in concluding that the predictive validity of the GE's is greater than their content validity.

Construct validity, according to Sharon, refers to the extent to which a test can measure what it attempts to measure. If a student has a higher score on a test after taking a course than he had before taking the course, the test might have "construct" validity. It is possible, however, as Sharon admits, that the test is not measuring the effect of instruction or an increase in the student's knowledge but rather intellectual maturation. Nevertheless,

⁸⁶Sharon, p. 4.

⁸⁷Sharon, p. 4.

⁸⁸Sharon, p. 4.

Sharon cites three unpublished reports that show score gains for the most part on the CLEP-GE:E's by students and uses the data as evidence of the "construct" validity of the GE's.⁸⁹

One of these studies and two others were cited by Willingham, one of Sharon's associates from the ETS-CEEB consortium, in his argument on the same point.⁹⁰ The majority of the studies cited by Sharon and his colleagues like Willingham ignore the CLEP-GE:E. Moughamian did not ignore it. Out of 131 students who took it and scored at the 50th percentile or higher, 19 percent (N = 23) had earned no college credits. But the number and percent (N = 49, 40 percent) more than doubled for those who had earned 1-15 credits. However, the number (N = 29) and percent (25 percent) of those who had earned 16-30 credits and those who had earned 31 or more (N = 30, 26 percent) were virtually the same.⁹¹ The success rate for those who had attended college one term tends to confirm ETS's claim of construct validity as defined by Sharon (content validity to most other researchers). But the similarity in

⁸⁹Sharon, pp. 5-7.

⁹⁰Warren W. Willingham, College Placement and Exemption (New York: CEEB, 1974), pp. 164-166.

⁹¹Henry Moughamian and others, Characteristics of Students by CLEP Performance (n.p.: n.p., October 1, 1971), p. 4 (ERIC ED 100 982).

success for those having no college credits and those having 16 or more tends to deny it.

Had ETS been more proficient when drawing the original sample of sophomores on whom the CLEP-GE:E norms were based, Sharon, Willingham, and other advocates of it would not have had to conceal or excuse the lack of score gains. The composition ability of the students in each of the three groups--no courses taken; at least one course taken; most courses taken--should have been tested before they attended college. After two years of attendance, each of the groups--made up of students equal in composition ability as identified by the pre-test--should have been given the CLEP-GE:E. If they had score gains on it as great as those for the other General Examinations, ETS would have been aided in its claim for "construct" (content) validity.

Score gains are also measured by correlating the years of formal education with test scores. The greater the correlation the greater the validity of a test like a CLEP-GE:E. Four reports cited by Sharon show that as formal education increased so did test scores.⁹² Sharon uses such correlations as evidence of "construct" validity. CLEP might measure learning that takes place outside the classroom that is the same as the learning that takes place in college general education courses. But the study by

⁹²Sharon, pp. 6-7.

Moughamian and others demonstrates that the younger the student and the more recent his exposure to high school classes the greater his success on the CLEP-GE's.⁹³

Correlations of the CLEP-GE's with other standardized tests and intercorrelations among the GE's themselves produced moderate to high correlations but none, Sharon claims, so high as to suggest that the tests are not measuring distinct skills or knowledge.⁹⁴ Among the investigators listed in the bibliography of this study are those such as Beanblossom, Strecher, and Richards who would not concur with Sharon; they believe the tests are heavily loaded with reading comprehension items.

An article like Sharon's that uses data not readily available or that draws conclusions from nonexistent data casts doubt on the sponsor's and producer's credibility and the merit of their program.

In their essays Coad and Apstein summarize the charges that are usually made against the CLEP composition examinations. They share their reasons for rejecting the examinations with most of the critics opposed to the tests.

In his argument that the CLEP composition examinations lack content validity, Coad asks, "how can anyone . . . devise an objective examination that is universally equivalent

⁹³Moughamian and others, *passim*.

⁹⁴Sharon, pp. 9-10.

to a course in which 'almost anything can happen' and obviously does?"⁹⁵ Coad refers to two data based reports and one personal essay to support his contention that freshman composition courses are diverse in content. In addition, he argues that the CLEP composition examinations lack content validity because they test knowledge of correctness and felicities, only one aspect of freshman composition, and not others such as acquiring the ability to express oneself effectively.⁹⁶ Coad refers to one article and a study on the objectives of freshman composition teachers to support this contention. Coad's last argument holds that strictly objective tests of writing ability like the CLEP composition examinations lack content validity because they do not include an essay section.⁹⁷

Before discussing the two CLEP Subject Examinations in English Composition, Apstein gives her reasons for opposing any CLEP examination in writing. Writing is a skill difficult to measure and it is taught in courses diverse in purpose. Although an objective test of writing may correlate highly with an essay test, the correlation is not a measure of ability. Her last objection is to the emphasis such tests

⁹⁵Bruce E. Coad, "Change and Freshman English: Is CLEP an Answer?" ADE Bulletin, XXXVI (March 1973), 57.

⁹⁶Coad, p. 58.

⁹⁷Coad, p. 58.

put on memorizing facts, not on learning to think independently or cogently which, she claims, is a goal of most freshman composition teachers.⁹⁸

The few data based studies on the CLEP-GE:E's can be separated into three broad areas: 1) its content, 2) norms and cutting scores, and 3) predictive validity.

The Content of the CLEP-GE:E

Three studies were conducted on the content validity of the CLEP-GE:E. A committee of faculty members from English at Virginia Western Community College reviewed it and declared it lacked content validity.⁹⁹ No explanation was given about how this determination was reached.

Although he did not identify their qualifications, Caldwell had the content of the CLEP-GE's analyzed by "subject matter specialists." These specialists divided the content of the CLEP-GE:E into two categories: "representative of either typical high-school courses or representative of typical college-level courses."¹⁰⁰ How they did so

⁹⁸Barbara Apstein, "Deficiencies of the CLEP Writing Examinations," College Composition and Communication, XXVI (December 1975), 350.

⁹⁹J. Andrew Archer and Harry C. Nickens, "Credit by CLEP: A Disconcerting Look at a Good Idea," Community/Junior College Research Quarterly, I (January-March 1977), 183.

¹⁰⁰Edward Caldwell, "Analysis of an Innovation (CLEP)," Journal of Higher Education, XLIV (December 1973), 701.

was not explained. Despite difficulty in labeling all items, 23 of the 100 items were judged high school level questions.¹⁰¹ Rather than strictly a test of the content of one of the college general education courses, the CLEP-GE:E may be said to be a test, in part, of prior learning--as it avowedly is--but of learning from a particular source, secondary English classes. However, it must be acknowledged that first term college composition courses can repeat to a greater or lesser extent materials students study in high school courses. The opinions voiced by the respondents to Casserly's questionnaire are supported by Caldwell's specialists' judgment.

The English Department at the University of Toledo conducted an analysis of the content of the CLEP-GE:E. To determine as precisely as possible what the examination covers and the "proportions of emphasis," the answers to each question were analyzed.¹⁰² These were their findings:

Almost one-third of the . . . [answers] (30.3%) fall into the broad category of knowledge of Standard English Grammar, Usage, Word Choice, and Idiom A little more than one-fifth (22.4%) involve the Ability to Detect Verbosity, Redundancy, Clichés, and Mixed Metaphors. Another one-fifth (21.1%) fall under knowledge of English Grammar. The remaining one-fourth fall

¹⁰¹ Caldwell, p. 701.

¹⁰² Robert S. Rudolph and Richard M. Summers, "The CLEP General Examination in English Composition: What Does It Really Test?" Freshman English News, VI (Spring 1977), 3.

into three separate categories: Ability to Detect a Lack of Clarity in Diction (11.7%), Knowledge of Standard Usage (10.4%), and Knowledge of English Idiom (4.1%).¹⁰³

Rudolph and Summers conclude that the test does measure what CEEB claims it measures; it cannot be said to lack content validity from the testmakers' point of view. "The test stresses knowledge of the conventions of standard written English and the ability to recognize certain stylistic problems and to reword sentences without regard to the resultant effect on paragraph coherence or emphasis within the paragraph."¹⁰⁴

Rudolph and Summers' objection and the objection of other composition teachers is that, "while a knowledge of standard written English and the ability to detect certain kinds of stylistic infelicities are important" in a freshman composition course, such a course is usually just as concerned about the student's ability to choose a topic, write a thesis statement, and compose a unified, coherent adequately developed essay.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³Rudolph and Summers, pp. 3-4.

¹⁰⁴Rudolph and Summers, p. 3.

¹⁰⁵Rudolph and Summers, p. 4.

The CLEP-GE:E Norms and Cutting Scores

Three articles, one pro and two con, have been written on the norms of the CLEP-GE:E and the cutting scores based on them.

In his uniquely designed study Christensen compared CLEP students, freshman English students, and Advanced Placement English Students. The CLEP students were divided into two groups. The CLEP credit group (N = 24) scored at least 450 on the CLEP-GE:E and received credit for freshman English. The CLEP waived group scored from 390 to 499 on the same test and were exempted from freshman English but received no credit. The freshman English students were also placed in two groups. In the first, 25 had freshman English GPA's of 2.7-4.0, and in the second, 24 had GPA's of 1.0-2.3. The 24 randomly selected AP students had scored 3, 4, or 5 on the College Board's Advanced Placement Test in English Composition.¹⁰⁶ All five groups took the CLEP Subject Examination in English Composition. The means of the five groups on the essay part of the Subject Examination given on page 188 were these:

	\bar{X}	S.D.
AP English	17.17	6.80
CLEP Credit	13.88	5.90
Freshman English A or B	13.52	5.99
Freshman English \bar{C} or \bar{D}	11.25	4.23
CLEP Waiver	11.22	5.09

¹⁰⁶Mark Christensen, "The College Level Examination Program's Freshman English Equivalency Examinations," Research in the Teaching of English, XI (Fall 1977), 186-187.

Only the mean of the AP English students differed significantly ($p < 0.05$) from the means of the other four groups.¹⁰⁷

The mean of the AP group on the objective part of the Subject Examination ($\bar{X} = 55.38$) differed significantly ($p < 0.05$) with the other groups except for the CLEP credit group. The CLEP credit group ($\bar{X} = 51.83$) differed from the CLEP waived group and freshman English C or D group but not the other two. The freshman English A or B group ($\bar{X} = 48.12$) differed only from the AP group. The mean for the CLEP waived group was 41.61 and 39.92 for the freshman English C or D group.¹⁰⁸ Based on the findings of his study, Christensen concluded that the CLEP-GE:E cutting scores were valid for the students attending that particular university.¹⁰⁹

In their article on the CLEP-GE's Archer and Nickens discussed what they regarded as a "common misconception"--the national norms and cutting scores based on them were correlated with course grades.¹¹⁰ They were not. The norms are simply the scaled scores of sophomores who may have taken no courses, one, or many in the general area. Archer and Nickens' institution, like MSU and many others, used the 25th percentile, scale score of 428, to award three quarter

¹⁰⁷Christensen, p. 188.

¹⁰⁸Christensen, p. 191.

¹⁰⁹Christensen, p. 192.

¹¹⁰"Credit by CLEP," p. 181.

hours of credit.¹¹¹ This score is 73 points lower than the mean (501) for the 41 sophomores in their sample who had taken no courses in English composition.¹¹²

To give a student three hours of credit if his score equaled the national mean score of those who had taken at least one course (504), ignoring for the moment the fact that that score is not an indicator of performance in the course, might be defensible. But to give three hours of credit for a score almost three-fourths of a standard deviation below the mean or more than twice the standard error of measurement below it is a questionable practice.

Caldwell attempted to learn the rationale of the American Council on Education for setting the cutoff score at the 25th percentile, but was given no justification other than "the tests were carefully studied."¹¹³ After securing the necessary publications from CEEB (the test, a manual on the scale scores, and a manual on conversion of the raw score to a scale score), Caldwell converted the 25th and 50th percentile scale scores to raw scores. By correctly answering 32 out of the 100 items on the GE:E, the student will score at the 25th percentile and by answering 44 correctly, he will score at the 50th percentile.¹¹⁴ Both

¹¹¹Archer and Nickens, p. 181.

¹¹²Archer and Nickens, p. 182.

¹¹³"Analysis," p. 700.

¹¹⁴"Analysis," p. 700.

instances assume no questions are answered incorrectly. (ETS claims to have raised the raw scores for more recent forms of the test according to Caldwell in a footnote. But, as he says, ETS may be asking for more items to be answered rather than increasing the difficulty of the items.¹¹⁵) The question Caldwell asks about all CLEP-GE's can be reframed and asked about the CLEP-GE:E specifically. "Would any college instructor be willing to grant a passing grade and three hours of credit to a student in a freshman composition course if the student took only one objective test and answered only 32 out of 100 items correctly?" The likelihood that the answer would be "No" is increased if the instructor accepts Caldwell's figure and presumes the possibility that 23 out of the 32 items could be high school level.

Archer and Nickens argue that the 25th percentile for the cutoff point should be changed to the 50th percentile because the CLEP is too inconsistent in predicting who should be exempted from general education courses.¹¹⁶ Fourteen students out of 334 (4 percent) who earned a D or F in a final course in the disciplines that comprise the General Examinations would have been excused from one or more of those courses based on their GE scores.¹¹⁷ By raising the

¹¹⁵"Analysis," p. 700.

¹¹⁶Archer and Nickens, p. 187.

¹¹⁷Archer and Nickens, p. 187.

percentile cutoff score to the 50th, the number who would have been exempted would have dropped from 14 to 3.¹¹⁸

They also argue that scores at the 50th percentile are "more typical of the level of A and B students while the 25th percentile . . . is more typical of the C and D students."¹¹⁹

The Predictive Validity of the CLEP-GE:E

Five correlation studies were conducted on the relationship of CLEP-GE:E scores with GPA's. These studies, divisible into three categories, should give an indication of the predictive validity of the CLEP-GE:E. The first category includes correlations of CLEP-GE:E scores with yearly GPA's; the second category is correlations of scores with GPA's for students who completed no freshman work; the third is correlations of scores with English course grades.

Two hundred sixteen students (117 men and 99 women) who were sophomores at the University of Delaware in the spring of 1967 were administered the complete battery of CLEP-GE's. The correlation of their GE:E scores with sophomore grades was .41.¹²⁰ Goolsby correlated the end of the year grades and CLEP-GE:E scores for six different

¹¹⁸Archer and Nickens, p. 188.

¹¹⁹Archer and Nickens, p. 188.

¹²⁰William E. Cashin, "The Relationship of Scores on the CLEP General Examinations to Grades," Educational and Psychological Measurement, XXXIV (Winter 1974), 908, 910.

student samples ($N = 122$). The correlation for those who were sophomores in 1966 was .45, in 1967 .30, and 1968 .45. The correlation for those who were juniors in 1966 was .45, in 1967 .30, and in 1968 .41.¹²¹ In his comprehensive study Hanson cited a Summary Report of the ACT Standard Research Report on Utah State University students which gave a moderate r of .42 of CLEP-GE:E scores with overall GPA.¹²²

In the first of two studies on the GPA of students who took no courses in their freshman year Losak and Lin showed that of the students who were comparable in their ability in English in their scores on a standardized test (Florida Twelfth Grade Test, FTG), those who did not take the basic courses did virtually as well as those who did. The mean on the FTG English test for the 134 students who had taken the CLEP tests was 80.28 and 80.04 for the 160 who did not take them. The GPA in advanced courses for the CLEP students was 3.47 which was very much like the 3.45 of the non-CLEP students. The overall GPA of the CLEP students, 3.15, was nearly the same as the non-CLEP students' 3.11. Losak and Lin also correlated the FTG English test scores with the

¹²¹Thomas M. Goolsby, Jr., "The Validity of the College Level Examination Program's Tests for Use at the College Sophomore Level," Educational and Psychological Measurement, XXX (Summer 1970), 378.

¹²²Emil Otto Hanson, "An Investigation of the Validity of the College Level Examination Program's General Examinations and a Review of Related Issues in Higher Education," Diss. University of Utah, 1973, pp. 94-95.

CLEP-GE:E scores for the 466 students whose mean GE:E score was 488.32 and found it to be .64.¹²³ This correlation shows that the two measurements are not the same.

In the second study Hanson also compared two groups, one of which had earned a year's work through the CLEP tests and one which had not. Each sample was comprised of 50 students. After applying the t test to the means of the students' sophomore, junior, and senior GPA's, Hanson determined there were no significant differences between the GPA's of the two groups.¹²⁴

The correlation that Cashin determined of CLEP-GE:E scores with sophomore GPA's, .41, was the same as for the mean CLEP-GE:E score and mean English composition course grade.¹²⁵ The correlation given in the ACT report cited by Hanson was a very low .17 of scores and college English grades.¹²⁶ Computing the correlations of grades earned in English with CLEP-GE:E scores for juniors yielded these correlations for Goolsby: .56 for those who were juniors in 1966, .32 in 1967, and .42 in 1968.¹²⁷

¹²³John Losak and Tien-Teh Lin, "A Comparison of Academic Success: College Credits Via General Examination or Course Enrollment," Journal of Educational Research, LXVII (November 1973), 129-130.

¹²⁴Hanson, pp. 126-127.

¹²⁵Cashin, p. 910.

¹²⁶Hanson, p. 94.

¹²⁷Goolsby, p. 379.

Archer and Nickens studied 229 students who had completed three quarters of freshman English. The mean CLEP-GE:E score for these students was 417 and the standard deviation was 85. Both the mean and standard deviation were significantly below ($p < .05$) the national norms. Archer and Nickens correlated CLEP-GE:E scores with final course grades for the course that was third in a sequence of three. Seventy-four students earned A's and their mean CLEP-GE:E score was 480; 126 earned B's and their $\bar{X} = 418$; 72 earned C's, $\bar{X} = 365$; 16 earned D's, $\bar{X} = 348$; 11 earned F's or withdrew, $\bar{X} = 417$. The correlation for these grades with CLEP-GE:E means was a very moderate .42 which was significant beyond the .05 level.¹²⁸ Archer and Nickens did not publish the results of any t tests they may have run.

Exemption from freshman English by way of the CLEP-GE:E is a major topic in the present study; consequently, correlations of CLEP-GE:E scores with freshman English course grades are of particular importance. Of those who studied this correlation only one of the four reported a correlation (.17) that was very low; the others reported either low (.32) or moderate (.41-.56) correlations that were all significant beyond the .05 level.

Even though the correlations are statistically significant, they may not be high enough to inspire confidence in

¹²⁸Archer and Nickens, pp. 185-186.

a potential user of the CLEP-GE:E. Archer and Nickens would not use CLEP-GE:E scores for exempting students. Because "course grades and CLEP scores are both measurements of college achievement and are both designed to measure college-level learning" course grades and CLEP General Examination scores should be more highly correlated than their study showed them to be.¹²⁹ The CLEP-GE's in their opinion "do not possess a high degree of concurrent validity."¹³⁰ If the values of the coefficients of determination and indices of forecasting efficiency for the correlations are computed, they might be interpreted to be additional indications of the tests' inability to predict student performance.

Archer and Nickens and a potential user of the CLEP-GE:E are mistaken if they believe that by raising the cutting scores for exemption the correlation between the exempted students' test scores and grades will be higher as a consequence. Reducing the number of exempted students narrows the range of ability and performance. Test score standard deviations and variability in grades are restricted when the distribution of student interest, talent, and ability is not normal. Predictive correlations assume that as grades increase, test scores increase. If the grades and

¹²⁹Archer and Nickens, p. 187.

¹³⁰Archer and Nickens, p. 187.

scores are nearly the same, the predictive correlation will approach .00. The sheer number of factors, unknown and unstable, that can affect a correlation is another reason why informed tests users, when they are deciding whether or not to use a test, take correlations into account but do not make them the sine qua non of their decision.

The ACT:E and CLEP-GE:E Compared

Most of the studies that have investigated the relationship of the CLEP-GE's with the ACT Assessment have concentrated on the ACT Composite score and have excluded the CLEP General Examination in English Composition. Few of the studies have focused on the relationship between the ACT English usage test and the CLEP-GE:E. Two of the three studies discussed below did correlate ACT:E and CLEP-GE:E scores. The other gives raw data that can be inspected for comparability of the two tests.

In his doctoral dissertation Hanson cited two sources unavailable to this researcher that gave ACT:E and CLEP-GE:E score correlations. A 1972 ACT report for Utah State University gave an r of .75 and a 1972 memorandum gave it as .74 for University of Utah students.¹³¹ The correlations Hanson compiled for ACT:E scores with CLEP-GE:E scores for three different samples, each having 100 students, were

¹³¹Hanson, pp. 98-99.

these: for University of Utah students $\underline{r} = .858$; for Utah State University students $\underline{r} = .609$; and for Weber State College students $\underline{r} = .74$.¹³²

Responding to the question that is inevitably asked, "Why, if the two tests are highly correlated, isn't one or the other discarded?" Hanson answers that the two are different in purpose. The ACT is a test of high school achievement whereas the CLEP is a test of college achievement.¹³³ Charges that the CLEP-GE's lack content validity, in particular, contain an inappropriate amount of high school level material, and charges that recent high school graduates or college freshmen perform as well as college sophomores on the General Examinations cast doubt on the likelihood that the ACT:E and CLEP-GE:E are discrete. Hanson could have pointed out that the correlations, although high, are not high enough to warrant considering the two tests equivalent and, therefore, measurements of the same knowledge or ability.¹³⁴

Moughamian and others computed the correlation of ACT:E scores with CLEP-GE:E scores for students who were part of their sample; the correlation for the 99 students was .7575. The total sample included 730 students who had attended or who intended to attend the City College of

¹³²Hanson, pp. 123-124.

¹³³Hanson, p. 141.

¹³⁴Moughamian and others, p. 8.

Chicago (CCC). If the student scored at the 50th percentile or higher on any of the CLEP-GE's he attempted, he was judged successful and awarded CCC credit. Unsuccessful students scored below the 50th percentile and received no credits.¹³⁵ In addition to providing a correlation that shows a significant relationship of the ACT:E with the CLEP-GE:E, Moughamian and others demonstrated the existence of a strong relationship in their profile of successful and unsuccessful students. Students who scored below the 50th percentile had a mean ACT:E score of 17.1; those who scored between the 50th and 74th percentiles had a mean of 24.0; and those who scored at the 75th percentile had a mean of 25.8.¹³⁶ The differences in ACT:E scores between the successful and unsuccessful students and between students in the three percentile intervals were typical of the differences in performances on all of the ACT area tests.

McCluskey did not correlate ACT:E and CLEP-GE:E scores but he does provide raw data that demonstrates a strong relationship between ACT:E performance and CLEP-GE:E performance. Seven hundred eighty Arkansas State University students in attendance from 1971 to 1974 took the CLEP-GE:E

¹³⁵Moughamian and others, p. 3.

¹³⁶Moughamian and others, p. 7.

but earned no credit.¹³⁷ Their mean CLEP-GE:E score of 390 placed them at the 15th percentile on the CLEP sophomore national norms but their ACT:E mean score of 18.1 placed them at the 48th percentile on the ACT norms.¹³⁸ Five hundred eighty-nine students achieved the minimum of 428 on the CLEP-GE:E (approximately 25th percentile) and earned 3 hours of credit in English composition. Their mean CLEP score of approximately 480 placed them at the 44th percentile but their ACT:E mean of 21.2 placed them at the 75th percentile.¹³⁹ Five hundred eighty-four met the minimum of 502 (approximately 50th percentile) and earned six hours of English composition credit. Their CLEP-GE:E mean score of approximately 560 placed them at the 73rd percentile which was, once again, a lower percentile ranking than their ACT:E mean gave them--24.1 and 91st percentile.¹⁴⁰ Among McCluskey's conclusions are these two: Based on the differences (no statistical analysis provided) in their mean scores on the ACT and CLEP examinations and on the number of credit hours they earned, both tests "adequately discriminate among the

¹³⁷ Jimmy McCluskey, Summary Report on Arkansas State University's Participation in the College Level Examination Program (CLEP)--1971-74 (n.p.: Arkansas State University, 1974), pp. 1-2 (ERIC ED 108 550).

¹³⁸ McCluskey, p. 2.

¹³⁹ McCluskey, p. 2.

¹⁴⁰ McCluskey, p. 2.

academic strengths of students"¹⁴¹ Between those who attempted CLEP and earned credit and those who attempted but earned no credit, a "substantial difference" was apparent.¹⁴²

The correlations given in Hanson's and Moughamian and others' studies and the similarities shown by McCluskey and Moughamian and others demonstrate consistency in measurement by the two batteries. This consistency casts more doubt on the distinction between the two tests made earlier by Hanson, a distinction also made by the testmakers themselves. If the ACT:E tests the knowledge and ability to use standard written English a student acquires in high school, and if the CLEP-GE:E tests college level knowledge and ability acquired outside of the classroom, one might expect less consistency in their measurement. Data provided by Moughamian intensify the doubt and give it credence. Dividing students into groups by age and by success or failure on the CLEP-GE:E showed that the younger students succeeded more often than the older.¹⁴³ Moughamian and others concluded, "The high level of performance by the younger students would seem to indicate that more recent exposure to formal education is

¹⁴¹McCluskey, p. 12.

¹⁴²McCluskey, p. 13.

¹⁴³Moughamian and others, p. 3.

related to success."¹⁴⁴ Sawyer made a similar observation on the ACT English usage test. "ACT English scores tend to decrease with students' age. For students 18 years and younger, they average about 18.5 standard score units; for 25 years and older, they average about 15.3 units."¹⁴⁵

Noticeably absent from these studies that show a strong relationship of ACT:E scores with CLEP-GE:E scores are correlations of ACT:E scores with grades and CLEP-GE:E scores and grades. A comparison of the predictive ability of these parallel tests coupled with the studies reviewed previously might reveal that one or the other has greater predictive validity. If neither does, administering both tests is a redundancy.

¹⁴⁴Moughamian and others, p. 9.

¹⁴⁵Sawyer, p. 9.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN RATIONALE AND PROCEDURE

Rationale

There are those college composition teachers who believe instruction in composition affects the academic performance of students positively. If all variables other than a composition course can be held constant, taking it might be shown to have an impact on students' GPA's. That is, if taking or not taking a first term freshman composition course is the only difference between two groups of students, and if there are any differences in their GPA's, tentative conclusions regarding the role of the course might be made.

ETS and CEEB contend that such a course is not needed by students matching or exceeding the national cutting score on the CLEP-GE in English Composition. If writing ability can be measured, it should be possible to identify a correlation of students' GPA's with their scores on any objective test of writing ability. Depending on their magnitude and direction, correlations of scores on the CLEP-GE:E with student GPA's might lend credence to ETS's claim that the test is valid.

There are means of judging the effects being exempted from or taking freshman composition can have other than

examining GPA's. To examine only academic performance when evaluating the efficacy of exemption or course work would be to imply that teachers and administrators are concerned primarily about the students' becoming more knowledgeable, not, for example, more self-confident, creative, or intellectually curious.

Another important but often overlooked measure of the worth of any college course or exemption from it is student opinion. Despite whatever objections there are to students' evaluations, students themselves can assess, from their limited and subjective perspective, the effects taking or not taking freshman composition has on their academic performance. Student responses to questionnaires appraising exemption, the CLEP-GE:E, and freshman composition can result in complementary and unique information bearing on the purposes of this study. Do those who were exempted agree with ETS and CEEB? Do those who took freshman composition agree with the teachers? Support from either would lend credibility to and help authenticate ETS's and CEEB's or the teachers' claims. Charges against them would discredit and make questionable their claims.

Samples

Two samples, Sample A and Sample B, were drawn from the same population: students who entered Mankato State University as freshmen fall quarter 1975. With one exception

the 22 Sample A students had scored a minimum of 429 (25th percentile) on the CLEP-GE:E. All 22 were exempted from the first of two freshman composition courses, English 101 Composition I. The 22 Sample B students took the course.

Mankato State University, Mankato, Minnesota, is a coeducational, state supported, multipurpose institution that grants associate, bachelor's, master's, and specialist degrees. Professional programs are offered in the liberal arts, education, music, and business administration. Vocational programs are offered in dental hygiene, law enforcement, and executive secretarial fields. It is accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Other professional accrediting agencies have recognized various programs. Of the approximately 1500 freshmen who entered fall quarter 1975, nearly 45 percent were men. Approximately 30 percent of all the students majored in the arts and sciences, 15-20 percent in education, 15-20 percent in business, and 5 percent in nursing and health services. The other 25-35 percent included vocational students, undecided students, pre-professional students, and students whose majors accounted for less than 5 percent of the student body's choices.

The class of 1979 was chosen because three-year cumulative GPA's, not just a one or two-year GPA, could be determined, and because the students would probably be on campus spring quarter 1979 and available for interviews. Students

who had earned seventeen or more quarter hours of credit and were, therefore, beyond the first quarter of their freshman year before taking the CLEP-GE:E or the ACT English usage test were excluded because their college course work could have affected their performances on these tests. First quarter GPA's were determined because the ACT Assessment is supposed to predict those GPA's. Since the national norms and cutting scores for the CLEP-GE's are based on a student sample of college sophomores, a comparison of the samples' performance as sophomores with one another and the national sample was appropriate. A student's GPA at the end of the junior year should be more representative of academic performance than freshman or sophomore GPA because it is based on a greater number of courses and credit hours.

In order that the samples be comparable, elements were matched by sex, by major area of study, and by ACT English usage test scores. Complete demographic descriptions of the samples are in Appendix A and Appendix B.

(A variable not used in this study but one which can be used to match students is age. The students in Sample A and Sample B were similar in age. In only five of the 22 pairs of students in this study was one of the two students more than a year older than the other. Of that same five only two were more than three years older.)

Because males and females perform differently on

standardized tests and have performed differently on the ACT's and CLEP-GE's, as discussed in the review of the research previously, the first variable is gender. The two samples have the same male to female ratios, 8 males and 14 females. The male to female ratios of the two samples are not representative of the male-female ratio of the class of 1979. Although they comprised approximately 45 percent of the fall 1975 freshman class, males comprised only 36 percent of Sample A and Sample B.

The percent of MSU males taking the ACT:E, 44 percent, approximates the percent of males in the freshman class but it is higher than the 36 percent in the two samples. Of the 142 who took the CLEP-GE:E 27 percent were males, a percentage lower than the 36 percent of the samples.

In Sawyer's survey of the 1975 freshmen who took the ACT tests approximately 48 percent of the 45,222 students at 1,128 institutions were males.¹ This percentage is higher than the 44 percent for all MSU males and the 36 percent in Samples A and B. In comparison to national and MSU ACT:E figures, males in Samples A and B are underrepresented.

The national norms for the CLEP-GE:E given on page 10 of the 1976 edition of CLEP Scores were based on the scores of 2,582 sophomores; 53 percent were males. The percentage

¹Sawyer, pp. 9, 1.

of males in Sample A (36 percent) was lower than the national sample.

Because students in different disciplines do not perform alike, as discussed previously, the second variable is the students' choice of major fields of study. The majors of only 6 of the 22 pairs comprising the samples could not be matched exactly. The matches for these 6 were based on similarities presumed to be shared by students whose majors were in such disciplines as the natural sciences or humanities. For example, a theatre major was matched with an art major and a computer science major was matched with a biology major.

Table 3 shows the differences in percents between the majors chosen by all MSU students in the class of 1979 and those chosen by Samples A and B. The samples had higher percentages in the arts and science and business, lower in "others," and approximately the same percent in education and nursing and the health sciences.

Since there may be a significant difference in composition ability--the third variable--between those willing to take the CLEP-GE in English Composition and the balance of the student body, ACT English usage test scores were used to identify students equal in that ability. It was necessary that they be equally able since isolating one difference between them and determining if its presence had a null effect was a major objective of this study. To determine

if the two samples were equal in their composition ability as measured by the ACT:E, the F ratio and t test were applied to their ACT:E scores.

TABLE 3
MAJORS CHOSEN BY 1975 MSU FRESHMEN AND
MAJORS CHOSEN BY SAMPLES A AND B

Major	Percent of 1975 MSU Freshmen	Percent of Samples A and B
Arts and Sciences	30%	41%
Education	15-20%	14%
Business	15-20%	27%
Nursing and Health Services	5%	5%
Others	25-35%	14%

Source: Figures for all MSU students are based on a computer printout provided by the Registrar's Office in October 1978.

The F ratio was used to test the hypothesis that $s_a^2 \neq s_b^2$. With 21 degrees of freedom for the greater mean square, an F value of approximately 2.88 is needed to reject the null hypothesis of variance homogeneity at the 0.10 level. Since F = 1.12, the hypothesis of variance cannot be rejected; the variances of Sample A and Sample B are comparable.

A pooled variance t model was used to test the hypothesis that $\bar{X}_a = \bar{X}_b$. With 40 degrees of freedom a t value of

2.021 is needed to reject the null hypothesis at the 0.05 level of confidence. Since $t = 0.844$ and is not significant at the 0.05 level, the hypothesis of equality cannot be rejected; the two samples are equally able.

Table 4 shows that the males and females in Sample A had higher ACT:E mean scores than their counterparts in Sample B although the difference is not statistically significant. Both samples had higher means than the MSU population.

TABLE 4
MEAN ACT:E SCORES OF ALL 1975 MSU FRESHMEN
AND OF SAMPLE A AND SAMPLE B

	Males	Females	Total
		<u>MSU</u>	
Mean ACT:E	17.18	19.56	18.52
S.D.	4.49	4.35	4.41
N	450	575	1025
		<u>Sample A</u>	
Mean ACT:E	21.25	22.71	22.18
S.D.	4.18	2.71	3.39
N	8	14	22
		<u>Sample B</u>	
Mean ACT:E	19.87	22.14	21.32
S.D.	3.82	2.45	3.21
N	8	14	22

Table 5 shows the mean ACT:E scores of the 1975 freshmen nationwide whom Sawyer surveyed. All six means for the

two samples were higher than the three national means.
(The means for all MSU students were also higher than the national means.)

TABLE 5
MEAN ACT:E SCORES OF ALL 1975 FRESHMEN
SURVEYED BY SAWYER

	National Males	National Females	National Total
Mean ACT:E	16.9	18.3	17.6
S.D.	5.3	5.3	5.3
N	21,631	23,591	45,222

Source: Richard L. Sawyer, College Student Profiles, 1976-1977 ed. (Iowa City, Iowa: ACT, 1976), p. 10.

A comparison of the ACT:E scores of the two samples with two subgroups in Sawyer's study provides additional information on their representativeness. In the first group were students enrolled nationwide in public colleges that grant the master's degree, that is, colleges like MSU. The data for these students are in Table 6. The means for the samples were higher than for the national group. (MSU students also had means higher than the national group.)

TABLE 6

MEAN ACT:E SCORES FOR 1975 FRESHMEN NATIONWIDE ATTENDING
A PUBLIC COLLEGE GRANTING THE MASTER'S DEGREE

	National, Public, Master's Level		
	Males	Females	Total
Mean ACT:E	16.6	18.2	17.4
S.D.	5.0	5.1	5.1
N	3,931	4,560	8,491

Source: Richard L. Sawyer, College Student Profiles, 1976-1977 ed. (Iowa City, Iowa: ACT, 1976), p. 23.

In the second group were students enrolled in midwest colleges, both public and private, that, like MSU, grant the master's degree. Table 7 has the data Sawyer reported on these students. Both samples had higher male and female mean ACT:E scores than their midwest counterparts. (MSU males and the MSU total scored lower than the midwest group, but the MSU females scored slightly higher.)

CLEP-GE:E scores were available for only 20 of the 22 students in Sample A, 7 males and 13 females. The mean for the sample was 529.65 (S.D. 57.22) whereas the national mean was 498 (S.D. 99). The mean for the males in the sample was 524 (S.D. 59.40), and for females it was 532.69 (S.D. 55.77); nationally males' $\bar{X} = 482$ (S.D. 98) and females' $\bar{X} = 516$ (S.D. 98).² The means for the males and females in

²CLEP Scores, p. 10.

Sample A on the CLEP-GE:E were somewhat higher than the national means.

TABLE 7

MEAN ACT:E SCORES OF 1975 FRESHMEN ATTENDING A PUBLIC OR PRIVATE MIDWEST COLLEGE GRANTING THE MASTER'S DEGREE

	Midwest Males	Midwest Females	Midwest Total
Mean ACT:E	18.1	19.5	18.9
S.D.	4.7	4.7	4.8
N	1,409	1,581	2,990

Source: Richard L. Sawyer, College Student Profiles, 1976-1977 ed. (Iowa City, Iowa: ACT, 1976), p. 49.

Retrieval of the scores of MSU students on the CLEP-GE's by computer search is not possible because they are not stored in the institution's computer center. As a consequence, no study of the MSU student means on the CLEP-GE's was undertaken. The representativeness of Sample A's performance on the CLEP-GE:E in terms of the MSU population is not known.

In 1975 142 fall quarter freshmen were exempted from first term freshman composition at Mankato State University based on their CLEP-GE:E scores. Of these 142 just 40 had also taken the ACT:E. Only 33 of the 40 completed their junior year by earning at least 124 quarter hours of credit. Three of the 33, even though exempted, chose to take

freshman composition and were necessarily excluded from the sample. Matches for 8 of the remaining 30 students could not be found. No student from the pool of ACT:E students had a major similar to or ACT:E score within a one to one and a half standard error of measurement of any exempted student's ACT:E score. Justification for using the standard error of measurement for equating student composition ability is provided by the results of the t test and F ratio discussed previously.

The size of a sample is very important. The larger the sample, the greater the probability it will be representative of the population from which it is drawn. The more representative it is, the more confidence one can have in the statistical analyses of it and the interpretations those analyses predicate. Although sample size is important, homogeneity can be just as important. Given the purposes and needs of this study, conclusions based on small, homogeneous samples would be more tenable than those based on larger, less homogeneous samples.

The CLEP-GE:E at MSU

Dr. Ross Alm, recently retired Director of Admissions at Mankato State University, described MSU's policy regarding the CLEP General Examinations in an interview on August 22, 1978. At that time MSU had been using the CLEP-GE's for approximately five years.

In order for the student to be waived or granted credit, the only qualification is that he or she enroll at MSU. All CLEP students have been high school graduates. No CLEP credit is awarded in English if the student takes the CLEP-GE:E after or while taking English 101 Composition I. Since the interview with Dr. Alm in 1978, the General Education requirements in Communications have been changed. Currently if a student is waived or granted 4 hours of CLEP credit, his or her total Communications requirement of 9 quarter hours is reduced to five. Exemption excuses the student from one of the 3 three-hour courses that comprise Communications: English 101 Composition I, English 102 Composition II, or Speech Communication 100 Fundamentals of Speech. By earning 9 hours of credit, the student is exempted from the Communications requirement of General Education.

The cutting scores for the CLEP-GE:E at MSU are these: 4 hours of credit are waived for students scoring at the 25th percentile (scale score of 429); 4 hours of credit are awarded to students scoring at the 33rd percentile (scale score 452); 9 hours of credit are granted at the 66th percentile (540). The national norms and cutoff scores used by other institutions were the basis for the cutoff scores chosen by the Admissions Office. The faculty reviewed the test but played no part in setting the cutoff scores.

Although no formal studies of the CLEP-GE's have been

conducted by the institution, Dr. Alm expressed satisfaction in them. He said that CLEP students are above average students whose dropout rate is substantially lower than their peers. The empirical studies reviewed by Kreplin sustain Dr. Alm's contention. Of the studies completed on matched samples of students--matched in background and ability--exempted students as opposed to students not exempted generally have higher GPA's are more likely to graduate, to graduate with honors, to attend graduate or professional school, and are just as likely to participate in extracurricular activities. Studies not utilizing matched samples show similar results.³

As evidence of the ability of MSU CLEP students, Dr. Alm cited a memorandum he sent to the university's registrar on December 30, 1977. His non-random sample of 20 fall quarter freshmen who had earned 40 or more CLEP credits scored above the 95th percentile on two standardized tests and their mean GPA was 3.57. The 16 non-randomly sampled freshmen who had earned only 4 CLEP credits scored below the 50th percentile on the tests and their mean GPA was 2.94.

Although he had no figures on how many students had taken the CLEP-GE:E, how many were awarded credit, how much credit had been awarded, how their grades compared to non-CLEP students', and how many took course work in or majored

³Kreplin, pp. 51-53.

in the area subsequent to taking the test, Dr. Alm supported the institution's use of the test and thought no changes should be made.

English 101 Composition I at MSU

Three sequential, cumulative courses comprise freshman composition at MSU. The first of them, English 101 Composition I, a one quarter, three credit course, is the only composition course required for either the B.S. or B.A. degree. Depending on the student's major and degree program, English 102 Composition II might also be required. Students may choose to take the course for a letter grade or on a Pass/No Pass basis. A grade of C or higher is a Pass; a D or an F is a No Pass. Usually 25-30 students are enrolled in each of the 30-40 sections offered each fall.

English 101 at MSU would be labeled a "practical" composition course by Kitzhaber. The major objective of the course, according to the departmental syllabus, is to help the student gain the ability to write effective expository and argumentative essays that are unified, coherent, and adequately developed. To develop the student's ability to think and write logically and clearly is a secondary objective. A handbook is used by most instructors to teach grammar, punctuation, diction, sentence and paragraph structure, and other elements of composition. A reader is frequently used to provide models and topics for the students'

essays. The most popular readers focus on language or rhetorical invention and arrangement. To help the student develop the ability to write with originality and honesty and the ability to edit and proofread one also objectives of the course. Excluded from the departmental syllabus for English 101 are the activities of reading fiction, poetry, and drama, and writing a research paper.

Although there is general agreement on the objectives and content of the course among the instructors, each has considerable freedom of choice in what and how he or she will teach. The instructor alone determines the course requirements and sets the grading standards for his or her sections. The length, number, and types of writing assignments are the instructor's choices. The instructor decides whether or not to examine the students on their coursework. To emphasize grammar and usage or to emphasize logic is his or her decision. The instructor can spend the class time lecturing, conducting writing laboratories, leading class discussions, or doing anything else he or she deems worthwhile. Each instructor has wide latitude when choosing handbooks, workbooks, readers, and any other materials, and when using them.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

CLEP-GE:E and ACT:E Hypotheses

The two statistical procedures used in this study to determine whether to accept or reject the null hypotheses were Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients and analysis of covariance. The level of confidence at which the null hypotheses were accepted or rejected was $p < .05$. The casual reader of statistical studies is familiar with correlation coefficients but perhaps not with the infrequently used analysis of covariance.

As discussed elsewhere, one purpose of this study is to examine the validity and cutting scores of the CLEP-GE:E. Comparing the GPA of two groups, one that has taken the test and been exempted from a freshman composition course and one that has not, might result in data bearing on the test's validity and cutting scores. Another purpose discussed elsewhere is to determine if taking or not taking a composition course might have an impact on GPA. Composition ability, a factor related--presumably causally--to exemption, might also have an impact on GPA. The impact it can have could be confounded by the presence, or lack of it, of a freshman composition course.

Because it combines elements of the t test, analysis

of variance, and regression, analysis of covariance can do more than tell if there is a difference in the GPA's of Sample A and Sample B. It can determine the magnitude and direction of the relationship between the criterion variable, academic performance, and the control variable, composition ability. In addition, it can adjust the criterion variable score (GPA) for each element in the samples and the mean criterion score for each sample. These adjustments compensate for whatever disparity there may be between control variable scores (ACT:E scores) for the elements and the samples they belong to. F values are produced to determine if the mean differences in the adjusted scores are significant.

Had the t test been used to determine if there were any significant differences in GPA's between the two samples, the results might have been misleading. A t test can show as significant mean differences that analysis of covariance might not show as significant. The contrary can also occur. Differences in the control variables for two samples, even those that appear slight, can have a measurable effect on the significance of mean differences. Although the two samples were equated in composition ability, differences in their GPA's might have been exaggerated had the effect of the control variable not been taken into account.

All but one hypothesis for this study can be placed in

one of two categories. In the first are null hypotheses for the correlations between test scores and GPA's for the two samples individually. In the second are the null hypotheses for differences in the mean GPA's of the two samples.

Category I. Hypotheses Subjected to Analysis by Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients

- a. There is no relationship between CLEP-GE:E scores and first quarter GPA's for MSU students whose performance on the CLEP-GE:E exempted them from English 101.
- b. There is no relationship between CLEP-GE:E scores and freshman year GPA's for MSU students whose performance on the CLEP-GE:E exempted them from English 101.
- c. There is no relationship between CLEP-GE:E scores and sophomore year GPA's for MSU students whose performance on the CLEP-GE:E exempted them from English 101.
- d. There is no relationship between CLEP-GE:E scores and junior year GPA's for MSU students whose performance on the CLEP-GE:E exempted them from English 101.
- e. There is no relationship between ACT:E scores and first quarter GPA's for MSU students whose performance on the CLEP-GE:E exempted them from English 101.
- f. There is no relationship between ACT:E scores and freshman year GPA's for MSU students whose performance on the CLEP-GE:E exempted them from English 101.
- g. There is no relationship between ACT:E scores and sophomore year GPA's for MSU students whose performance on the CLEP-GE:E exempted them from English 101.

- h. There is no relationship between ACT:E scores and junior year GPA's for MSU students whose performance on the CLEP-GE:E exempted them from English 101.
- i. There is no relationship between ACT:E scores and English 101 Composition grades for MSU students not exempted from the course.
- j. There is no relationship between ACT:E scores and first quarter GPA's for MSU students who took English 101.
- k. There is no relationship between ACT:E scores and freshman year GPA's for MSU students who took English 101.
- l. There is no relationship between ACT:E scores and sophomore year GPA's for MSU students who took English 101.
- m. There is no relationship between ACT:E scores and junior year GPA's for MSU students who took English 101.

Category II. Hypotheses Subject to an Analysis of Covariance

- a. There is no difference between the mean first term GPA's of two student groups: first, MSU students exempted from English 101 by their performance on the CLEP-GE:E; second, MSU students who took English 101.
- b. There is no difference between the mean freshman year GPA's of two student groups: first, MSU students exempted from English 101 by their performance on the CLEP-GE:E; second, MSU students who took English 101.
- c. There is no difference between the mean sophomore year GPA's of two student groups: first, MSU students exempted from English 101 by their performance on the CLEP-GE:E; second, MSU students who took English 101.
- d. There is no difference between the mean junior year GPA's of two student groups: first, MSU students exempted from English 101 by their performance on the CLEP-GE:E; second, MSU students who took English 101.

The null hypothesis that stands out of the two categories states, "There is no relationship between the CLEP-GE:E scores and ACT:E scores of MSU students whose CLEP-GE:E performance exempted them from English 101."

Results of CLEP-GE:E and ACT:E Hypotheses

The results of the correlation analyses of the hypotheses in Category I are given in the three tables below. As shown by Table 8 none of the four null hypotheses of the relationships between CLEP-GE:E scores and GPA's for MSU students exempted from English 101 can be rejected at the .05 level of confidence. The four correlations are extremely low.

TABLE 8

SAMPLE A (N = 20) CLEP-GE:E AND GPA
CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS

	<u>r</u>
CLEP-GE:E Score vs. First Quarter GPA	.124*
CLEP-GE:E Score vs. Freshman GPA	.103*
CLEP-GE:E Score vs. Sophomore GPA	.122*
CLEP-GE:E Score vs. Junior GPA	.134*

* $p > .05$

Table 9 shows that none of the four hypotheses of the relationships between ACT:E scores and GPA's for MSU students

exempted from English 101 can be rejected at the .05 level. The first two of the correlations are very low; the third and fourth are low.

TABLE 9

SAMPLE A (N = 22) ACT:E AND GPA CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS

	<u>r</u>
ACT:E Score vs. First Quarter GPA	.211*
ACT:E Score vs. Freshman GPA	.190*
ACT:E Score vs. Sophomore GPA	.357*
ACT:E Score vs. Junior GPA	.403*

* $p > .05$

Table 10 shows that three of the null hypotheses for MSU students who took English 101 must be accepted but two must be rejected. The three null hypotheses of the relationships between ACT:E scores and English 101, first quarter, and freshman GPA's cannot be rejected at the .05 level of confidence. The first correlation is very low, the third is low, and the second is moderate. The null hypotheses of no relationships between ACT:E scores and sophomore and junior GPA's must be rejected at the .05 level. Both correlations are moderate.

TABLE 10

SAMPLE B (N = 22) ACT:E AND GPA CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS

	<u>r</u>
ACT:E Score vs. English 101 GPA	.224*
ACT:E Score vs. First Quarter GPA	.404*
ACT:E Score vs. Freshman GOA	.357*
ACT:E Score vs. Sophomore GPA	.476**
ACT:E Score vs. Junior GPA	.432**

*p>.05**p<.05

The r for the relationship identified in the null hypothesis that is the exception is .596. It is significant at the .01 level of confidence. The null hypothesis is rejected; the correlation of CLEP-GE:E scores with ACT:E scores for MSU students exempted from English 101 is moderate and typical.

The four null hypotheses tested by analysis of covariance produced the adjusted mean GPA's for Sample A and Sample B reported in Table 11. Each sample had an N of 22. The mean ACT:E score for Sample A was 22.18 and for Sample B it was 21.32. The adjustment lowered Sample A's mean GPA's either .02 or .03 and raised Sample B's the same amounts.

TABLE 11
UNADJUSTED AND ADJUSTED MEAN GPA'S OF SAMPLE A
AND SAMPLE B

	Unadjusted GPA	Adjusted GPA
<u>First Quarter</u>		
Sample A	3.44	3.42
Sample B	3.10	3.12
<u>Freshman</u>		
Sample A	3.42	3.40
Sample B	3.06	3.08
<u>Sophomore</u>		
Sample A	3.40	3.37
Sample B	3.09	3.12
<u>Junior</u>		
Sample A	3.39	3.36
Sample B	3.09	3.12

Two of the null hypotheses tested by analysis of covariance were accepted and two were rejected at the .05 level of confidence. The results of the tests by analysis of covariance are shown in the four tables below.

Table 12 shows that there is no significant difference between the mean first term GPA's of Sample A and Sample B. The null hypothesis is accepted.

TABLE 12

ANALYSIS OF COVARIANCE OF FIRST TERM MEAN GPA'S OF
SAMPLE A AND SAMPLE B WITH ACT:E AS THE COVARIANCE

Source of Variation	Degrees of Freedom	Sum of Squares	Residuals	
			Mean Square	<u>F</u>
Between	1	.93	.93	3.44*
Within	41	11.16	.27	
Total	42	12.09		

* $p > .05$

Table 13 shows that there is a significant difference between the mean freshman GPA's of Sample A and Sample B. The null hypothesis is rejected. The mean GPA of Sample A was higher as indicated earlier in Table 11.

TABLE 13

ANALYSIS OF COVARIANCE OF FRESHMAN MEAN GPA'S OF SAMPLE A
AND SAMPLE B WITH ACT:E AS THE COVARIANCE

Source of Variation	Degrees of Freedom	Sum of Squares	Residuals	
			Mean Square	<u>F</u>
Between	1	1.18	1.18	4.21**
Within	41	11.44	.28	
Total	42	12.62		

** $p < .05$

Table 14 shows that there is no significant difference between mean sophomore GPA's of Sample A and Sample B. The null hypothesis is accepted.

TABLE 14

ANALYSIS OF COVARIANCE OF SOPHOMORE MEAN GPA'S OF
SAMPLE A AND SAMPLE B WITH ACT:E AS THE COVARIANCE

Source of Variation	Degrees of Freedom	Residuals		
		Sum of Squares	Mean Square	<u>F</u>
Between	1	.71	.71	3.38*
Within	41	8.58	.21	
Total	42	9.29		

* $p > .05$

Table 15 shows that there is a significant difference between mean junior GPA's of Sample A and Sample B. The null hypothesis is rejected. The mean of Sample A was higher as indicated before in Table 11.

TABLE 15

ANALYSIS OF COVARIANCE OF JUNIOR MEAN GPA'S OF SAMPLE A
AND SAMPLE B WITH ACT:E AS THE COVARIANCE

Source of Variation	Degrees of Freedom	Residuals		
		Sum of Squares	Mean Square	<u>F</u>
Between	1	.70	.70	4.12**
Within	41	6.93	.17	
Total	42			

** $p < .05$

Interpretation of the Results of the
ACT:E and CLEP-GE:E Hypotheses

None of the correlations of CLEP-GE:E scores with GPA's for Sample A is significant at the .05 level. Each of the four null hypotheses that state there is no relationship between CLEP-GE:E scores and GPA's is accepted. The four correlations all show little relationship between the predictor and criterion. Prediction based on these correlations would be barely better than chance. The index of forecasting efficiency for the median correlation is less than 1 percent and the coefficient of determination is 1-2 percent. The researchers cited in the review of the literature, however, reported low to moderate correlations that could be useful.

Although the four correlations have little predictive

value, the CLEP-GE:E cannot be said to lack content validity. Correlations for small, homogeneous samples that limit the range of student ability and performance are usually low or very moderate. Sample A is typical of such samples. In addition, curriculum and sex biases may have occurred in the sampling.

Like the four null hypotheses for CLEP-GE:E scores and GPA's, the four for ACT:E scores and GPA's for Sample A cannot be rejected at the .05 level. However, all four are higher than the correlations of the CLEP-GE:E with GPA's. The two extremely low correlations of ACT:E scores with first quarter and freshman GPA's increase prediction to just two to three percentage points beyond chance. The low correlations of ACT:E scores with sophomore and junior GPA's show definite but small relationships that could be useful in predicting grades.

The ACT:E has greater content and predictive validity than the CLEP-GE:E. It is a better predictor of academic performance. It is better at identifying those elements of standard written English and expository prose that correlate with GPA. Cutting scores based on ACT:E norms could be used with greater confidence than those based on the CLEP-GE:E.

The null hypotheses for the correlations of the four GPA's with ACT:E scores for Sample A have their counterparts in Sample B. The correlations of first quarter and freshman GPA with ACT:E scores for Sample A are extremely low and

without predictive value. But for Sample B they are low and have predictive value. The correlations of sophomore and junior GPA's with ACT:E scores for Sample A are low. The same correlations for Sample B were moderate. The ACT:E was a better predictor of GPA for Sample B than for Sample A.

None of the researchers cited in the literature reported a correlation as low as the correlation of first quarter GPA with ACT:E scores for Sample A. The same correlation for Sample B is like that found by some researchers but not as high as the moderate correlations given by others. The correlation of freshman GPA with ACT:E scores for Sample A is also lower than that reported by other researchers, but for Sample B the correlation is similar to those reported by most researchers. The correlations of sophomore and junior GPA's with ACT:E scores for both Sample A and B are like those reported by other researchers.

Generally speaking, the correlations of ACT:E scores with English grades cited in Chapter II were either low or moderate, just as they were for the CLEP-GE:E and English GPA correlations. The very low correlation of English 101 grades with ACT:E scores reported in this study can be attributed partially to the small, homogeneous sample and partially to test and GPA unreliability and invalidity. The English 101 GPA for Sample B might have been higher or lower had four students not taken the course on a Pass/No

Pass basis. The P's they earned were computed as C's. A difference in grades might have changed the r and acceptance of the null hypothesis. The index of forecasting efficiency for the correlation of .224 is 3 percent and the coefficient of determination is 5 percent. When isolated and applied to a sample such as Sample B, the ACT:E is a poor predictor of academic performance.

Only one of the six correlations given by Hanson and Moughamian and others was close to the moderate r of .596 for CLEP-GE:E and ACT:E scores for Sample A. All the others were high or very high. Although none of the five correlations reached the r of .90 that is used to establish test reliability, those strong correlations suggest the two tests are not as discrete as their writers might claim. The correlation determined in this study, however, would gratify the test writers because it shows the tests not to be equivalent. That the content of the two is different is additionally evidenced by the higher correlations of ACT:E scores with GPA's than of CLEP-GE:E scores with GPA's for Sample A.

The first hypothesis based on analysis of covariance is accepted. There is no significant difference between the first term GPA's of Sample A and Sample B. Whether the composition students would have had first term GPA's not significantly different from those exempted had they not taken English 101 cannot be determined. Because the two samples

were shown to be equivalent in composition ability, and because no change in Sample B's composition ability as the result of taking the course was established, the role of freshman composition remains unclear.

The second hypothesis based on analysis of covariance is rejected. There is a significant difference between the freshman GPA's of Sample A and Sample B; the GPA of Sample A was higher. Taking a freshman composition course might have affected the freshman GPA of Sample A. But because their GPA was higher, it cannot be assumed that not taking English 101 worked to their disadvantage. Despite studying standard written English and expository prose in English 101, the students in Sample B had a significantly lower freshman GPA. Whether it would have been higher, even lower, or the same had they not taken the course cannot, once again, be determined.

Like the first null hypothesis based on analysis of covariance, the third is accepted. There is no significant difference in the sophomore GPA's of Sample A and B. Freshman composition has no identifiable impact on this GPA. Like the second, the fourth hypothesis based on analysis of covariance is rejected. There is a significant difference between the junior GPA's of Sample A and B. The same inference can be drawn from rejection of this null hypothesis as from rejection of the other; freshman composition has no discernible impact on junior GPA.

None of these four null hypotheses gives evidence that the CLEP-GE:E lacks predictive validity or that the national cutting scores are inappropriate for MSU students. The GPA's of Sample A were either no different from or higher than Sample B's. No inferences regarding a cause and effect relationship between freshman composition and GPA's can be drawn based on acceptance or rejection of the four analysis of covariance null hypotheses. The role of freshman composition remains ambiguous. Perhaps teachers do not teach and students do not learn about composition in a first term freshman composition course. Perhaps grades in other courses are not influenced by what is taught and learned in it.

Questionnaires

To provide complementary information on the role of freshman composition or exemption from it and the claims of ETS regarding the CLEP-GE in English Composition and the claims of the college composition teachers regarding their courses, the two samples were polled. Copies of the cover letters and questionnaires are included in Appendix C.

During spring quarter 1979, one questionnaire was mailed to the students in Sample A and another to those in Sample B. To encourage returns, a \$1.00 fast food franchise gift certificate was included with each cover letter, questionnaire, and stamped, self-addressed return envelope. The cover letters were typed on MSU English Department letter

heads. Within six weeks 36 usable questionnaires were returned, 21 from Sample A and 15 from Sample B. The return rate for Sample A was 95 percent, for Sample B it was 68 percent, and for the two together it was 82 percent. Only one person in Sample A, a female, failed to return her questionnaire. Three males and four females failed to return the Sample B questionnaire but the male-female percentage answering it--33 percent males and 67 percent females--was near the total sample percentage of 36 percent males and 64 percent females. The number of students choosing any one of the answers to the multiple-choice questions is given in Appendix C.

When the number of respondents to each question was being recorded, two flaws in the design of the questionnaire became apparent. First, the students were not told to choose only one answer for each question; consequently, the N for some questions exceeds the N of those returning the questionnaire. Second, freshman composition was not more specifically identified as "first quarter freshman composition."

The questionnaires shared some questions but differences in the samples necessitated differences in most of the questions. Besides the usual demographic information on gender, major, credit hours earned, and GPA, opinions on eight areas were elicited:

1. The students' assessment of their writing ability

2. The students' assessment of the impact of their writing ability on their GPA's
3. The exempted students' opinion of exemption
4. The exempted students' assessment of their need for freshman composition
5. The exempted students' opinion of the efficacy of the CLEP-GE:E
6. The exempted students' opinion of the MSU cutting scores
7. The freshman composition students' assessment of the impact of freshman composition on their writing ability
8. The freshman composition students' opinion of freshman composition

Responses to the six opinion questions were given on a five-point scale. Number eleven was an open-ended request for comments on exemption from Sample A and on freshman composition from Sample B.

The responses to questions in some areas can be compared for the two samples; answers to others can be compared separately with either the teachers' or ETS's claims. No statistical tool such as Chi square could be used to analyze the results of the questionnaire because the samples were too small.

Questionnaire Results

Most of the students in Sample A thought themselves decidedly able writers according to their responses to question number five. Six of the 21 (29 percent) ranked themselves among the ablest of all students and 11 (52 percent)

judged themselves better able than most. Two (10 percent) put themselves in the average group and two others (10 percent) put themselves in the least able group.

The question from Sample B most like question number five on the Sample A questionnaire was number six. Number six asked the composition students how able they were to write after taking freshman composition. Unlike the Sample A students none from Sample B ranked himself or herself among the most able. The same number, 11, but a higher percentage, 73 percent, judged themselves better able than most. Twenty-seven percent from Sample B ($N = 4$) thought themselves average in contrast to 10 percent from Sample A. Unlike the two in Sample A, none in Sample B judged himself or herself among the least able.

A comparison of the responses of Sample B to questions number five and six can indirectly reveal the students' opinion of the impact of freshman composition on their ability to write. None ranked himself or herself among the ablest before or after taking freshman composition. The number of those who thought themselves better able than most increased from 8 (53 percent) to 11 (73 percent). Two (13 percent) thought themselves less able before taking freshman composition; however, none thought so after taking freshman composition.

Both samples were asked what impact their writing ability had on their performance in their courses (questions

number six and seven). A higher percentage of Sample A students than Sample B thought writing ability had a tremendous or significant impact, 81 percent versus 47 percent. None in Sample A thought the impact moderate but 40 percent in Sample B did. The combined percentages for each sample, 19 percent versus 13 percent, for little and no impact were similar.

Seventy-six percent (N = 16) of the exempted students thought exemption was either right or definitely right (question number seven). Fourteen percent (N = 3) thought exemption either not right or definitely not right. Consistent with their opinion of exemption was their appraisal of the value freshman composition would have had for them (question number eight). Sixty-four percent (N = 14) thought freshman composition would have had little or no value. Twenty-three percent (N = 5) thought it would have had considerable or outstanding value.

None from Sample A judged the CLEP-GE:E to be a thorough and precise measurement of writing ability. Forty-one percent (N = 9) thought it proficient; 27 percent (N = 7) thought it adequate; and 32 percent (N = 7) thought it had occasional gaps or was plainly deficient. To complement their opinion of the validity of the CLEP-GE:E they gave in question nine, question ten asked for their opinion of the cutting scores. Forty-one percent (N = 9) thought the scores should be higher or significantly higher. Half (50

percent, N = 11) thought them adequate. Nine percent (N = 2) thought they should be lower but none thought they should be significantly lower.

Sample B was asked three questions about freshman composition. In response to question eight, nearly half (47 percent, N = 7) thought freshman composition was either right or definitely right for them. Thirteen percent (N = 2) thought it was not right; 40 percent (N = 6) thought it neither good nor bad. Questions nine and ten asked the students whether the content of freshman composition was too repetitious or too difficult. Sixty percent (N = 9) thought freshman composition seldom repeated or only occasionally repeated what they had already learned. One-third (33 percent, N = 5) said it repeated half the time. Seven percent (N = 1) said it usually repeated. Thirteen out of the fifteen respondents (87 percent) thought the course work was seldom too difficult. The other two (13 percent) said it was too difficult about half the time.

Interpretation of Questionnaire Results

The interpretations given below are conditional and limited. Based as they are on the responses of small, non-representative samples to questionnaires not subjected to rigorous statistical analysis, the inferences and implications abstracted from the students' opinions should be viewed with caution. The information has merit but only if

duly qualified.

Generally speaking, both ETS and the composition teachers should be pleased with the results of the questionnaires. The grades the students earned, particularly those of Sample A, lend credence to the opinions they expressed.

The students in Sample A had a decidedly higher opinion of their composition ability than those in Sample B. Not only did Sample A differ sharply with Sample B on this question, the majority of Sample A, in contrast to less than half in Sample B, thought writing ability very important in academic performance. The two null hypotheses that were rejected because they did show Sample A to have significantly higher GPA's gives credence to the samples' assessments of their writing ability and its impact on their GPA's.

The composition teachers can take satisfaction in the value Sample A students attribute to composition ability and ETS can take satisfaction in the performance of the students who were exempted by its test.

ETS claims that because of exemption students save time and money and their college educations are not incomplete or enervated. The majority of Sample A students concurred. One out-of-state student claimed to have saved over \$400 in tuition. Eight of the 22 students in Sample A graduated two to three quarters before their peers in

Sample B; only one from Sample B graduated early. Several said that being exempted prevented their being bored or discouraged. By not taking freshman composition, the Sample A students were able to take more classes of greater personal interest. Choosing a major and completing more than one were abetted by exemption.

Just 3 out of 21 Sample A students were not supportive of exemption. In the only study other than Casserly's that surveyed students and elicited their opinion of the CLEP-GE's, Caldwell found that 13 percent of his sample believed they had experienced academic difficulty as a result of eliminating courses by CLEP and 32 percent said CLEP had harmful effects.¹ None of the Sample A students mentioned any of the disadvantages of earning credit by examination identified in the studies of student opinion reviewed by Kreplin. The disadvantages included strains on one's health, pressures to perform, and limits on one's social life. Not having contact with the instructors of the courses they were exempted from and not having the opportunity to mature intellectually were additional disadvantages the students identified.²

The Sample A students did not view exemption and

¹Edward Caldwell, "In-College Effects of Acceleration by Examination," Journal of College Student Personnel, XVIII (September 1977), 402.

²Kreplin, pp. 47-50.

freshman composition as being diametrically opposed, one having merit and one not. Almost one-fourth thought freshman composition could have been of considerable or outstanding value to them. In response to question eleven, many said freshman composition is necessary and valuable, particularly if the course focuses on writing not on grammar or literature. Two students expressed mild regret about not taking freshman composition, but two others lamented and said no one should be excused from college composition coursework. Many students in Sample A said exemption is sound only if the student has had a strong background in English, usually made possible by taking accelerated or demanding high school composition and rhetoric courses.

In their responses to question nine, Sample A students appear to be in agreement with those who believe the content and predictive validity of the GE:E is suspect. Like some of the respondents to Casserly's and Caldwell's questionnaires on the CLEP-GE's, one-third of Sample A doubted the efficacy of the CLEP-GE:E as a measurement of writing ability. The strongest student objection to credit by examination was to the construction and quality of the examinations and their relationship to the courses the students were exempted from according to the studies Kreplin reviewed.³ Two students suggested another or additional

³Kreplin, pp. 47-50.

test should be given. But two others praised the CLEP-GE:E as a good test of "basic grammar." One student thought even the best writers were challenged by the test.

Based on their responses to his questionnaire, Caldwell concluded, "Some students thought that the performance level for credit was too low, leading them to think they were highly competent in an area, a belief that proved wrong in subsequent coursework."⁴ Caldwell's students and investigators such as Archer and Nickens who have expressed doubt about the CLEP-GE:E cutting scores are joined by several Sample A students. Almost as many believe the cut-off scores should be raised as believe they should remain the same. The student who saved \$400 said the scores should be higher because he was able to score at the 25th percentile "by primarily guessing"

Even though none of the students in Sample B ranked himself or herself among the ablest of all writers, the composition teachers were sustained in their claim for the impact freshman composition can have. After taking freshman composition, none thought himself less than average in ability as did two in Sample A, and nearly three-fourths thought themselves better than average. Nearly one-half of Sample B thought freshman composition right for them whereas only two of the fifteen did not think it right. In

⁴ "In-College Effects," p. 402.

their study of freshman composition and standardized tests of writing, Hackman and Johnson also found strong support for freshman English among students. Of those Yale freshmen surveyed, "about 80% . . . with English felt that English improved their writing."⁵ Although most of the students were supportive, there was no significant difference in the quality of the essays written by those who took a fall term English course and those who did not.⁶ Those who took the course that SAT verbal scores equivalent to those who did not.⁷

Despite the fact that Sample B's GPA's were either no different from or significantly lower than Sample A's, the composition teachers' claims for freshman composition, especially when coupled with Sample A's regard for it, have been given credence by Sample B's response to the questionnaire.

Two of the nine students who responded to question eleven and commented on their freshman composition courses said freshman composition was the most valuable of all their general education courses. Contrarily, five complained about the content of the course or lack of instruction by the

⁵Judith D. Hackman and Paula Johnson, Yale College Freshmen: How Well Do They Write? (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University, August 1976), p. 15 (ERIC ED 140 753).

⁶Hackman and Johnson, p. 17.

⁷Hackman and Johnson, p. 18.

teacher. Differences in grading standards among instructors and their emphasis on either expository or narrative writing distressed the students. Some complained they wrote too much; others said they wrote not at all. The students wanted more attention paid to writing essay examinations, term papers, and résumés.

Although their responses to questions nine and ten generally indicated the Sample B students found freshman composition course work somewhat repetitious and not difficult, their written comments indicate concern about what should be and is taught in freshman composition.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The claim by ETS, the producer of the CLEP-GE:E, and CEEB, its sponsor, that their test is valid and the national cutting scores appropriate has been supported in part by this study. The claim by college composition teachers that a freshman composition course affects academic performance has been given limited support.

The strongest support for ETS and CEEB in this study was provided by the results of the tests of null hypotheses by analysis of covariance. The exempted students performed academically as well as or significantly better than their non-exempted peers. The cutting scores were apparently set neither too high nor too low for MSU students. In their responses to their questionnaire, the majority of Sample A students expressed satisfaction in exemption and the several advantages and benefits they enjoyed as a result of being exempted.

Earlier studies such as Christensen's, Losak and Lin's, and Hanson's gave evidence that appropriate cutting scores can be set and exemption need not impair one's college education. The low to moderate correlations of CLEP-GE:E scores with cumulative GPA's and English course grades cited in

previous studies were typical of those for a test of its type.

The strongest support for the composition teachers was not GPA but the results of the questionnaires of both samples. Although the Sample A students had greater confidence in their writing ability and a more pronounced belief in its impact on academic performance than Sample B students, both samples were generally supportive of freshman composition. Most Sample B students saw themselves improve as a result of taking freshman composition, and most thought the course met their needs.

The most telling indictments of the CLEP-GE:E made in this study were against its content validity and cutting scores. Like the students in Casserly's and Caldwell's studies, enough Sample A students expressed doubt in the original CLEP-GE:E as a measure of writing ability and means of exempting students to warrant close analysis of the current test's content validity and cutting scores. As the studies reviewed by Kreplin show, the source of greatest student dissatisfaction with credit by examination is the content validity of the examination.

Archer and Nickens, Caldwell, Rudolph and Summers questioned the item selection and difficulty of the items. Several items were not college level, and the test did not measure the ability of the student to compose. The revised CLEP-GE:E may have greater content validity because it

purports to have reduced the number of error recognition items and increased the number of items bearing on the composition process. Inclusion of an essay section should overcome the resistance of those who demand a sample of the student's writing in any test of composition ability.

The cutting scores on the original CLEP-GE:E face three serious charges. The first is Caldwell's charge that the test is a fatuous assessment of student writing and its superficiality cloaked by the conversion of the raw score/formula score to a percentile ranking. The second is Archer and Nickens charge that ETS failed to norm the CLEP-GE:E properly by correlating scores and grades for the national sample. The third is the charge that ETS has acted irresponsibly in not verifying the existence of score gains--if any--on the test. If a potential user of the revised version finds that it has been normed as badly and its cutting scores established as questionably as for the original, he or she would have ample reason for rejecting it.

Although it is the topic of most statistical studies on the CLEP-GE:E, predictive validity is not by itself irrefutable evidence of the test's worthiness. Like the correlation studies reviewed in Chapter II, the analyses of covariance in this study partially and obliquely yield credibility to the test. The findings of these studies can contribute to a decision to use it; they are not, however, dependable and precise witnesses to the test's merit and

should not be used exclusively. GPA validity and reliability, test validity and reliability, indices of forecasting efficiency, and coefficients of determination as discussed in Chapter II are all factors that must be taken into account when F ratios and r values are used to make decisions regarding the CLEP-GE:E.

The most telling indictments against freshman composition in this study were the GPA's of Sample B students and their thoughts on the content of their composition courses and the quality of the instruction they received. Had the instruction and emphasis in the course been different, the GPA's of the Sample B students might have been higher as the teachers would like to claim. A course focusing on rhetoric or logic (a Kitzhaber "liberal" course) might have been more helpful than one focusing on grammar, usage, and punctuation (a Kitzhaber "practical" course). If the students had received more effective instruction, their opinions about composition might have been more positive and their GPA's higher. Despite the sophistication of analysis of covariance, isolating one course and asking it to show an impact on sixty others may have been an unreasonable demand. If the students had taken both Composition I and Composition II, which requires more and better writing than Composition I and provides instruction in special areas like writing essay tests, the impact of freshman composition on academic performance might have been significant.

Why students who were equal in composition ability and who received composition instruction did not have GPA's equal to and graduate as early as their peers might not be explained by their potential or their course work. More crucial than the results of any one test or course might be the personality of the student, his or her needs and desires. Exempted students may be more intellectually curious, ambitious, goal oriented, and harder working than non-exempted students. Neither exemption nor freshman composition may be very important to a student's academic performance. Students who seek exemption may be highly motivated students whose exemption reenforces their motivation.

Recommendations

The ACT:E should be considered as a replacement for the CLEP-GE:E. The predictive and content validity of the ACT:E is equal to that of the CLEP-GE:E as shown by the studies reviewed previously; the r 's for ACT:E scores and composition course grades and the r 's for CLEP-GE:E scores and composition grades both ranged from very low to moderate. The correlations between ACT:E scores with grades and CLEP-GE:E scores with grades for the two small but homogeneous samples in this study demonstrate that for MSU students taking both tests is a redundancy. The correlations of GPA's with CLEP-GE:E scores for Sample A were extremely low whereas the r 's of ACT:E scores with GPA were

very low to low. The same ACT:E correlations for Sample B were low to moderate. This study has shown that the ACT:E is a better predictor of GPA than the CLEP-GE:E. The interpretation of the results of the null hypotheses in Chapter IV explain why it is superior.

It is the recommendation of this researcher that the English department faculty at MSU consider adopting the ACT:E for exempting students from English 101 Composition I and English 102 Composition II.

The first step in their consideration should be an analysis of the content of the ACT:E. The items on the ACT:E must correspond in kind and difficulty to the content of English 101 and English 102. If the test possesses content validity, statistical analyses should be conducted to determine if it has predictive validity. If the correlations of the students' ACT:E scores with composition GPA's are statistically significant, predictive validity will have been established. In part content validity will also have been established. Evidence of the predictive validity of the ACT:E based on any criteria other than grades in these two courses would be irrelevant because it is freshman composition not the freshman or sophomore year the student is to be exempted from. For a similar reason, the ACT Composite score cannot be a criterion. The ACT:C is a measure of composition ability, mathematical ability, and the ability to read in the natural and social sciences from an informed

point of view. Its purpose is not to measure only composition ability.

No student's exemption from freshman composition should depend solely on anticipated correlations of an ACT:E score with composition grades. Regression, not correlation, should be used for prediction. Because high school grade point average (HSGPA) is the best single predictor of college academic performance, the HSGPA's of students who have taken Composition I and Composition II should be correlated with their two course grades. If correlations for HSGPA are present, a multiple-regression equation using ACT:E and HSGPA as the predictor variables and Composition I and Composition II grades as the criterion variables should be developed.

If the ACT:E does indeed test "the student's understanding of the conventions of standard written English and the basic elements of effective expository writing," it should screen out those students for whom Composition I and Composition II would be a needless review of composition fundamentals. If HSGPA identifies the more ambitious and harder working student, it should screen out the student whose perseverance would earn him or her an A or B in college composition.

To complement the multiple-regression equation prediction and to assuage any doubts about the ACT:E's predictive and content validity, each student seeking exemption should

write an essay. An objective, multiple-choice test that does not require the student to submit a writing sample is an incomplete measure. The reasons for requiring an essay were outlined in the discussion of the reliability and validity of objective and essay tests of writing ability in Chapter I. For any student to pass English 101 and English 102, he or she should be able to write competently; to earn exemption from those courses the student should demonstrate that skill. This essay examination could be constructed by the MSU English department. The essays could be read holistically by two faculty members who would assign the essay A's or B's according to criteria agreed upon before the essays are read. A third reader would be called on as necessary. Any essay less than A or B in quality would be rejected and the student denied exemption. Each essay would receive two grades by each reader, one grade for Composition I and another for Composition II.

If the student's ACT:E score and HSGPA predict a B in either or both composition courses, he or she would be allowed to write the essay examination. To be waived three credits for English 101 the student should predict a B in the course and earn at least a B on the essay. To be granted three hours of credit for English 101 the student should predict an A and write an A essay. In all instances the weaker performance would determine if credit is to be waived or granted. The same standard would apply to English 102.

Analyses like those described above should be conducted by any university that has made a curriculum decision as important as exempting students from freshman composition. Because composition GPA's do not exist for all MSU CLEP students, these same analyses could not be conducted on the CLEP-GE:E at MSU, another reason for replacing it with the ACT:E. Studies on score gains on the ACT:E could be carried out to provide additional information on its validity--an analysis not feasible with the CLEP-GE:E. By expanding the data base of the analyses, it would be possible to determine if the ACT:E could be used for student placement in remedial, regular, or honors sections of freshman composition.

If the ACT:E is found to be invalid in any way and if a multiple-regression equation that would incorporate it could not be developed, another test such as the revised CLEP-GE:E should be considered by the department. Scrutiny of any test must involve analysis of the content and predictive validity of the test. The procedures used in norming the test and establishing cutting scores must be known. Only a test of composition ability that includes a writing sample should be used to grant or waive credit in freshman composition, and it should be used only for exemption from freshman composition.

APPENDIX A

Sample A and Sample B: Sex, Major, ACT:E and CLEP-GE:E Scores and Percentiles

Subject	Sample	Sex	Major	ACT:E Score	ACT:E Percentile* Rank	CLEP-GE:E Score	CLEP-GE:E Percentile** Rank
1A	A	M	Business Administration: General	11	15	473	41
1B	B	M	Business Administration: Administrative Management	11	15		
2A	A	M	Accounting	25	94	575	77
2B	B	M	Business Administration: Administrative Management	23	87		
3A	A	F	Theatre	22	81	537	65
3B	B	F	Art	22	81		
4A	A	M	History	22	81	537	65
4B	B	M	Social Studies: History	21	73		

Subject	Sample	Sex	Major	ACT:E Score	ACT:E Percentile* Rank	CLEP-GE:E Score	CLEP-GE:E Percentile** Rank
5A	A	F	Sociology: Social Worker	23	87	602	83
5B	B	F	Sociology: Social Worker	23	87		
6A	A	F	Business Administration: Management	20	66	548	69
6B	B	F	Business Administration: Management	19	59		
7A	A	M	Mathematics	22	81	462	37
7B	B	M	Mathematics	19	59		
8A	A	M	Chemistry	25	94	629	90
8B	B	M	Chemistry	22	81		
9A	A	F	Accounting	23	87	500	52
9B	B	F	Accounting	24	91		

Subject	Sample	Sex	Major	ACT:E Score	ACT:E Percentile* Rank	CLEP-GE:E Score	CLEP-GE:E Percentile** Rank
10A	A	F	Spanish	25	94	577	77
10B	B	F	Spanish	27	97		
11A	A	M	Computer Science	22	81	Not Available	
11B	B	M	Computer Science	24	91		
12A	A	F	Medical Technology	25	94	572	76
12B	B	F	Nursing	23	87		
13A	A	F	Accounting	25	94	494	50
13B	B	F	Business Administration: Marketing	22	81		
14A	A	F	French	25	94	623	89
14B	B	F	Art	23	87		
15A	A	M	Economics	20	66	458	35
15B	B	M	Economics	18	51		

Subject	Sample	Sex	Major	ACT:E Score	ACT:E Percentile* Rank	CLEP-GE:E Score	CLEP-GE:E Percentile** Rank
16A	A	F	Computer Science	24	91	Not Available	
16B	B	F	Computer Science	24	91		
17A	A	F	Elementary Education	25	94	564	74
17B	B	F	Elementary Education	24	91		
18A	A	M	Accounting	23	87	534	64
18B	B	M	Business Administration: Finance	21	73		
19A	A	F	Sociology: Case Worker	21	73	419	22
19B	B	F	Sociology: Case Worker	21	73		
20A	A	F	Music Education	19	59	471	40
20B	B	F	Music Education	19	59		

Subject	Sample	Sex	Major	ACT:E Score	ACT:E Percentile* Rank	CLEP-GE:E Score	CLEP-GE:E Percentile** Rank
21A	A	F	Business Education: Executive Assistant	16	38	475	42
21B	B	F	Business Education: Executive Assistant	17	44		
22A	A	F	Computer Science Interdisciplinary	25	94	543	67
22B	B	F	Biology	22	81		

*ACT percentiles taken from Table 1, p. 4 of the 1978-1979 edition of Using the ACT Assessment on Campus.

**CLEP percentiles taken from Table 1, p. 10 of the 1976 edition of CLEP Scores: Interpretation and Use.

APPENDIX B

Sample A and Sample B: Grade Point Averages and Junior Credit Hours

Subject	Sample	English 101 Composition I Grade	Fall Quarter 1975 GPA	Freshman GPA	Sophomore GPA	Junior GPA	Junior Credit Hours
1A	A	C	2.58	2.68	2.30	2.26	130
2A	B		2.00	2.28	2.16	2.43	125
2A	A	P	3.00	2.91	2.89	2.95	140
2B	B		2.67	3.00	3.08	2.88	143
3A	A	B	3.35	3.47	3.55	3.53	150
3B	B		3.50	3.17	3.23	3.29	147
4A	A	B	4.00	4.00	3.79	3.48	145
4B	B		3.44	3.22	3.37	3.30	144
5A	A	A	3.06	2.84	2.65	2.76	142
5B	B		3.25	3.22	3.32	3.24	142

Subject	Sample	English 101 Composition I Grade	Fall Quarter 1975 GPA	Freshman GPA	Sophomore GPA	Junior GPA	Junior Credit Hours
6A	A		3.67	3.62	3.64	3.76	154
6B	B	A	3.73	3.27	3.23	3.14	146
7A	A		3.50	3.74	3.62	3.52	153
7B	B	C	3.62	3.81	3.85	3.70	145
8A	A		2.81	2.81	2.88	3.01	135
8B	B	P	3.56	3.63	3.54	3.45	139
9A	A		3.37	3.45	3.30	3.34	150
9B	B	B	3.18	3.43	3.26	3.49	145
10A	A		4.00	4.00	3.83	3.85	138
10B	B	B	2.73	2.65	2.74	2.63	140
11A	A		3.00	3.00	3.13	3.29	136
11B	B	P	3.64	3.75	3.66	3.61	141

Subject	Sample	English 101 Composition I Grade	Fall Quarter 1975 GPA	Freshman GPA	Sophomore GPA	Junior GPA	Junior Credit Hours
12A	A		3.06	3.06	3.11	3.11	136
12B	B	A	4.00	3.73	3.78	3.74	137
13A	A		3.82	3.82	3.83	3.87	138
13B	B	P	3.42	3.29	3.14	3.10	137
14A	A		4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	143
14B	B	B	2.75	2.81	2.87	3.03	139
15A	A		3.83	3.83	3.81	3.67	145
15B	B	C	2.00	1.86	2.01	2.19	136
16A	A		3.86	3.57	3.79	3.88	145
16B	B	B	3.43	3.53	3.40	3.44	145
17A	A		3.81	3.81	3.81	3.30	131
17B	B	B	3.07	3.17	3.08	3.20	127

Subject	Sample	English 101 Composition I Grade	Fall Quarter 1975 GPA	Freshman GPA	Sophomore GPA	Junior GPA	Junior Credit Hours
18A	A		3.75	3.63	3.62	3.60	141
18B	B	B	2.29	2.63	2.63	2.55	138
19A	A		2.21	2.11	2.30	2.56	147
19B	B	A	3.07	3.17	2.94	3.13	141
20A	A		3.85	3.75	3.57	3.55	139
20B	B	B	3.67	3.40	3.35	3.28	135
21A	A		3.80	3.71	3.58	3.53	154
21B	B	B	2.31	2.40	2.39	2.39	149
22A	A		3.35	3.48	3.77	3.77	136
22B	B	B	2.93	1.79	2.89	2.75	147

APPENDIX C

Sample A Cover Letter

18 April 1979
P.O. Box 53

Dear Mankato State University Student:

From all the students at Mankato State University who were exempted from freshman composition during the school year 1975-1976, you have been randomly selected to take part in a study of student exemption from freshman composition. Your response to the attached questionnaire regarding exemption will be used in an evaluation of exemption from freshman composition at Mankato State University. Your response will make known the student's opinion of the impact exemption has had on his or her course work, and it will affect the practice and procedure of student exemption in the future. Your help is greatly appreciated; please accept the enclosed gift certificate as an expression of my thanks.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Houston
Assistant Professor of English

Sample A Questionnaire

DIRECTIONS: Your answers are to be strictly anonymous; do not sign your name to this sheet. Return your questionnaire in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope.

1. What is your sex?

13 a. Female

8 b. Male

2. What is your major field of study?

3. By the end of winter quarter 1978 approximately how many quarter hours of credit had you earned?

0 a. 150 or less

3 b. 151-157

4 c. 158-174

7 d. 175-181

7 e. 182 or more

4. As of the end of winter quarter 1978, what is your cumulative grade point average (GPA) approximately?

Sample A reported a mean GPA of 3.42.

5. Compared to other students how able are you to write?

6 a. Among the ablest of all students

11 b. Better able than most students

2 c. As able as the average student

0 d. Less able than most students

2 e. Among the least able students

6. What impact has your writing ability had on your performance in your courses?

- 1 a. No impact
- 3 b. Little impact
- 0 c. Moderate impact
- 15 d. Significant impact
- 2 e. Tremendous impact

7. Based on your ability and background was exemption right for you?

- 10 a. Definitely was right
- 6 b. Was right
- 2 c. Was neither good nor bad
- 2 d. Was not right
- 1 e. Definitely was not right

8. Based on your knowledge of freshman composition, would have the course work been of value to you?

- 5 a. No value
- 9 b. Little value
- 3 c. Moderate value
- 3 d. Considerable value
- 2 e. Outstanding value

9. To be exempted from freshman composition you took the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) General Examination in English Composition. Based on your knowledge of your writing ability and the ability of other students, how effective was this test as a measure of your ability to write?

- 0 a. Thorough and precise
- 9 b. Proficient
- 6 c. Adequate
- 5 d. Occasional gaps
- 2 e. Plainly deficient

10. Do you believe the scores for exemption or for the granting of credit on this CLEP test need to be changed?
- 1 a. Scores should be significantly higher
 - 8 b. Scores should be higher
 - 11 c. Scores should remain the same
 - 2 d. Scores should be lower
 - 0 e. Scores should be significantly lower
11. If you have any comments to make about exemption from freshman composition, would you please make them on the back of this page?

Sample B Cover Letter

18 April 1979
P.O. Box 53

Dear Mankato State University Student:

From all the students at Mankato State University who took freshman composition during the school year 1975-1976, you have been randomly selected to take part in a study of freshman composition. Your response to the attached questionnaire regarding freshman composition will be used in an evaluation of freshman composition at Mankato State University. Your questionnaire will make known the student's opinion of the impact freshman composition has had on his or her course work, and it will affect the content and structure of future composition courses. Your help is greatly appreciated; please accept the enclosed gift certificate as an expression of my thanks.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Houston
Assistant Professor of English

Sample B Questionnaire

DIRECTIONS: Your answers are to be strictly anonymous; do not sign your name to this sheet. Return your questionnaire in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope.

1. What is your sex?

5 a. Male

10 b. Female

2. What is your major field of study?

3. By the end of winter quarter 1978 approximately how many quarter hours of credit had you earned?

5 a. 150 or less

2 b. 151-157

3 c. 158-174

2 d. 175-181

3 e. 182 or more

4. As of the end of winter quarter 1978, what is your cumulative grade point average (GPA) approximately?

Sample B reported a mean GPA of 3.07

5. Before you took freshman composition, how able were you to write?

0 a. Among the ablest of all students

8 b. Better able than most students

5 c. As able as the average student

2 d. Less able than most students

0 e. Among the least able students

6. After you took freshman composition, how able were you to write?

- 0 a. Among the least able students
- 0 b. Less able than most students
- 4 c. As able as the average student
- 11 d. Better able than most students
- 0 e. Among the ablest of all students

7. What impact has your writing ability had on your performance in your courses?

- 0 a. No impact
- 2 b. Little impact
- 6 c. Moderate impact
- 7 d. Significant impact
- 0 e. Tremendous impact

8. Based on your ability and background, was freshman composition right for you?

- 0 a. Definitely was not right
- 2 b. Was not right
- 6 c. Was neither good nor bad
- 6 d. Was right
- 1 e. Definitely was right

9. Did freshman composition simply repeat things you had already learned in high school or on your own?

- 4 a. Seldom repeated
- 5 b. Only occasionally repeated
- 5 c. Repeated about half the time
- 1 d. Usually repeated
- 0 e. Always repeated

10. Was most of the work in freshman composition too difficult for you to handle?
- 0 a. Nearly always too difficult
 - 0 b. Usually too difficult
 - 2 c. Too difficult about half the time
 - 0 d. Only occasionally too difficult
 - 13 e. Seldom too difficult
11. If you have any comments to make about freshman composition, would you please make them on the back of this page?

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